

Encounter

July 1978 80p

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A Last
Warning



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to
Critics*

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a
Future
?

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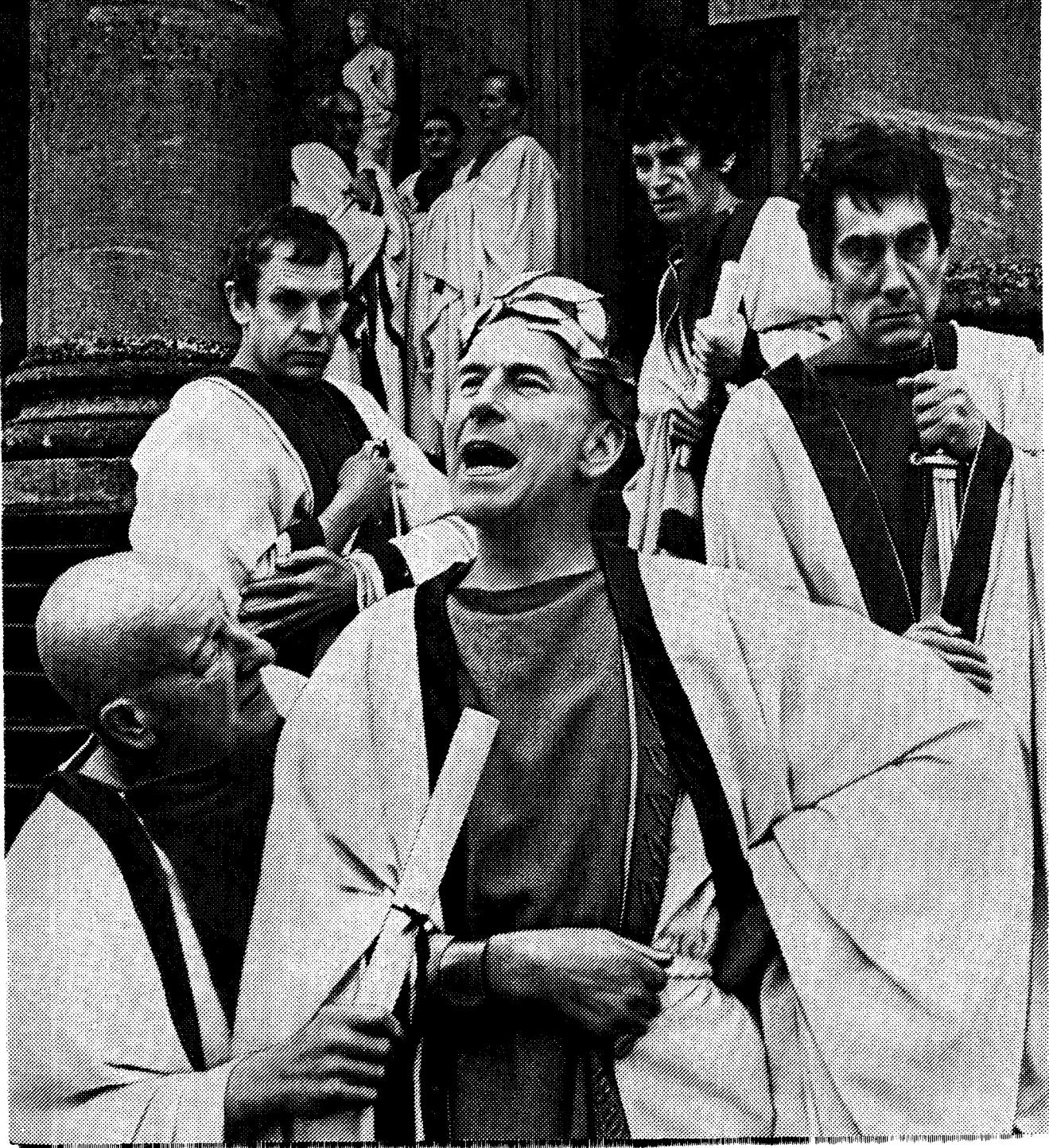
Edited by Melvin J Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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Tom Paulin

Unfinished Business

AT MY AGE you wake early and curse the dawn. You do so quietly, mind. And you accept it. The grey half-light, the absence of any future, are what you remark on. That and the pained clarity which comes from having drunk too much the night before. Not much too much, but enough glasses of Black Bush to send you into the wrong pattern of sleeping, a steep trajectory that finishes too soon. Reflecting on it you notice your habit of defining something closely. This is natural in someone who loves the law. It's all written down and it can't be altered. I admire this. So definite and exact, like a neat, hard instrument. It can never surprise you.

Across the landing, in my study, there is a particular shelf by my desk with a row of thick books in dark blue bindings. Three of them are histories of legal institutions, others are studies of the law of contracts, still others explain the nature of constitutions. These are my subjects and I've grouped them round my life like a wall made of dry stone. They are positive and certain, and it's taken me nearly a lifetime to determine them. Beyond them there's just weakness and a rather squalid disorder.

My wife is stirring from her sleep. I'll get out of bed now, put on my slippers and dressing-gown, and go downstairs to make her a cup of tea. In this way I can avoid her and be kind to her at the same time. As I climb slowly down the stairs I notice again how cold and dim this house is. It's too big for just the pair of us, though when I bought it more than twenty years ago what I liked was its feeling of used space (this is a neighbourhood of large houses and walled gardens). It used to be a rectory—belonged to St Peter's, the church at the end of the next street—and this appealed to me, for though

I'm a son of the manse myself I liked the thought of having something episcopalian around me.

When I hand Anne her cup I notice she doesn't thank me as she usually does. It's not unusual for her to be silent, in fact there are days when she talks more to the dog than to me. But her saying something first thing is part of our routine. Her face looks more blurred and tired than normally, and then I remember how she complained of feeling under the weather last night.

"Are you feeling any better?" I ask.

She holds her cup as though to warm her hand.

"I've a touch of flu, I think—I might stay in bed this morning."

Then she remembers.

"You don't mind? You could ring for the taxi. . . ."

Usually she runs me in in the mornings, though latterly I've taken either to walking or getting a cab. I've never driven a car and I never will. I prefer to let other people deal with contingency. Some of them even seem to like it.

"I'll do that", I tell Anne and go into the study to phone.

I am ready before the taxi arrives—I never bother much with breakfast. Just another cup of tea and a slice of toast.

The driver is different from the one who normally picks me up. He has a puffy face and wears a black knitted cap. A burly customer, about my height.

"Where to?" he grunts over his shoulder.

"Queen's—the front entrance."

As he turns out of the road I notice there is a school satchel on the seat beside me.

"Someone appears to have forgotten their bag", I tell him.

"Aye, it'll be one of the kids I lifted."

"Kids?"

"Yeah, I do a school contract every morning."

"Do children not walk to their school these days?"

"These ones have something wrong with them—an illness, like."

"What kind of illness?"

"Huh, I wouldn't know."

The man seems a shade impertinent and I say nothing for the rest of the trip. Odd weather for March. There is snow on the cypress trees in Botanic Gardens, a white patch of it on Kelvin's statue. The security guard sees me and nods us through.

I walk towards the red-brick Gothic façade in that slow, definite, powerful way that makes anyone coming towards me stay out of my path. I have been here long enough to earn that right.

"Made my own way in again this morning", I tell Maura as I close the office door behind me.

"Is that right, Professor Buller?"

"The wife's ill—flu or something, she says."

"Ock, that's terrible now."

"Could be worse—one of us might've gone down with a heart attack."

I smile benignly down at her and she glances back to the mail. I stand there, uncertain what to say next, noticing the copper tinge in her hair.

She looks up again.

"I've set yours out on your desk."

"Right—come in in about half an hour."

I leaf through a small mound of dull correspondence. So much dry paper. Some of it is plainly junk—an invitation to some exhibition in the museum, a circular about cutting heating costs, a programme of concerts for the summer term, a three-page questionnaire about teaching methods, a glossy publisher's brochure for some new legal series. I notice that Fergus McInlay is the general editor and toss it in the bin with the others. The man's a fool. Can't edit for tuppence. When I'm next down at Trinity I must forget to congratulate him.

in biro on a sheet of jotting paper. The creature's name is Margaret Alexander and she writes in a large, childish hand that she has failed "last term's test on the Law of Tort." She adds "my tutor has said for me to come and see you about this matter." Why on earth? The man could surely deal with it himself.

I lift the phone and buzz Maura.

"Has a Margaret Alexander been in to see you?"

"She has, yes. She brought a note for you and asked could she have an appointment—I told her to come back about half-eleven."

"Very well—I'll see her then."

Nuisance of a girl. All quite unnecessary.

There's little for me to do here this morning. I dictate a few letters, read the Faculty minutes and glance through a tedious book on the Northern Ireland constitution. Then I spend fifteen minutes dictating a brief notice for the *NILQ*. Long enough to stamp on the man. Then I stroll over to the senior common room to meet the Dean.

A man of little merit, he waddles across the room smiling at me. His cheeks are glossy—whether with rude good health or what, I wouldn't know. I frown down at him as though I am having difficulty in recognising him.

"Ah, Ronald", he says smoothly, "a little matter of unfinished business to discuss. Let me get you a cup of coffee."

He pauses, looking at me inquisitively.

"White, please", I tell him and walk over to an empty armchair under the large portrait of Lord Craigavon.

Brian begins to talk and I pretend to listen.

In five years' time I'll have reached retirement. I'm tired of having to listen to spry little men like Brian MacNamee. And yet I must guard against showing my fatigue to him or anyone else. It's important that no one guesses how vacant my attentiveness is. From one or two minor skirmishes in Senate lately I know that some of them entertain the foolish notion that I'm growing soft. Not so. Library committee attempted to block me last week, but to no avail. These men are fools and none of them has the power to do anything to me. I can always be confident that anyone I talk to feels an anxiety that is immediate and complete. And if I turn my avuncular smile on them they will always be

NEAR THE BOTTOM of the pile I come upon a note from a student. Written

grateful. Smiles, as anyone in my position will tell you, are of considerable use. A smile, it seems to me, is like your signature—something you have both acquired and practised. On most of the bits of paper that come my way I need only scrawl my initials—RB—and then pass whatever it is back to Maura. I have refined myself down to those two letters. I set them down just as I am presently stamping my smile on what Brian MacNamee has just said. I beam at him not because I like or esteem the man (which I emphatically do not) but because he has just delivered himself of an utterly unexceptional opinion. The man continues.

“And so I think, Ronald, that if we were to say in our next submission to the UGC that we’re overstretched this year, that we need an allowance above and beyond the last quinquennium’s agreed minimum—if you and I could agree on a form of words for this then I don’t see any problem in getting it past Standing Committee.”

“Quite so, Brian”, I tell him, “that’s my way of thinking entirely. But you’ll have to have a word with Boden about this. We mustn’t allow him—or ourselves for that matter—to be taken by surprise.”

“Well, actually I was just talking to him in the staff club yesterday—he’s on our side.”

“I knew he would be.”

“Oh I don’t think we need worry.”

“No, I’m sure we needn’t.”

And so we talk on in this fashion, circling the same issues almost as though there is something else that needs to be said, but which hasn’t yet been raised. I very much doubt if there is. It all seems quite simple and straightforward.

There are various small groups leaning over low tables, talking. Kirkpatrick has hidden himself behind *The Times* as usual, Jack Ardrey is doing the *Telegraph* crossword. The oil portraits on the walls are freshened by the cold sunlight. Beyond the tall windows, in the far distance, I see patches of snow on Cavehill. The noise of a siren carries from the city centre. Another bomb probably, somewhere in Royal Avenue—odd I didn’t hear it, though.

“Well, I must be getting along”, Brian says. “Look, tell you what, I’ll drop the draft proposal over before lunch. Doesn’t matter if you’re not in—I’ll see you at Faculty next

Wednesday then?”

“I’ll be there.”

RELIEVED AT HIS DEPARTURE, I realise there’s nothing else for me to do here. No one I much care to talk to. Somehow I have the feeling that there is something I should be doing, but I can’t for the life of me remember what it is. This annoys me and I feel slightly uneasy. It’s only when I get back to the office that Maura reminds me about this wretched girl.

“Send her in”, I order gruffly.

Then I give another buzz.

“If the Dean calls tell him I want a word with him.”

A shabby specimen. She is wearing a pair of rather dirty-looking jeans. She is round-shouldered, won’t look me in the eye, and keeps her hands in the pockets of a long black coat. She has a pallid face and wispy, untidy hair. My dislike of her is immediate. I let her stand there for a minute while I examine a letter, then I look over my spectacles at her.

“Take a seat, Miss Alexander.”

I nod towards a straight-backed wooden chair that stands near the leather armchair. Then I glance back to my letter.

“It seems you’ve failed one of your tests—or at least so you inform me.”

I lift her note by one corner, as if I’m using a pair of forceps, and dangle it for a moment.

“Yes, I failed it.”

“Could you not have seen your tutor about this? That’s what the man’s there for.”

She doesn’t reply.

“Who is your tutor by the way?”

“It’s Doctor Black, sir.”

“Ah yes, Black. One of our junior colleagues. You could have taken your failure to him, surely?”

“I did go to see him, yes. But that . . . that’s not the problem really. He says I should be able to resit it next term.”

“Well if you can resit next term—and I happen to know that you can—why are you here in my office, Miss Alexander?”

The girl glances at the floor and bites her lip. I notice that her eyes are wet.

It seems that for some unknown reason the fool is about to start crying.

“I wanted to tell Doctor Black—I wanted

to tell him, honest I did. But I couldn't. I just couldn't. . . ."

"Tell him what? You're not making yourself very clear."

"I mean he's sort of quiet, very reserved like. I didn't feel right talking to him."

The girl must be mad. For a moment I suspect there might have been something extra-curricular between her and Black. If there has the man will feel the weight of my wrath.

"And you thought you could talk to me?"

She looks up for a moment.

"I did, yes. I had to see someone."

"But what, Miss Alexander, had you to see them *about*? I must confess to being slightly puzzled."

She brushes her cheek ashamedly with her thumb. I see that her hand is clenched tight.

"It's very hard to explain. . . ."

I am about to explain to her that my time is precious, that I'm a very busy man, that she must be the first person to come and see me like this for more years than I can remember. But what with her pale wet face, her muddled hair, her general unkempt clumsiness and plaintive voice, she looks so completely foolish, and so abject, that I know my pleasure in simply getting rid of her would be minimal.

I decide to try another approach.

"I take it you have some problem of a . . . personal nature?"

There is silence. She keeps her eyes fixed on the floor. Is the girl never going to answer me?

"I don't know—it's just . . . it's just that I can't work any more. There's something stopping me . . . I keep breaking down and crying. I feel guilty."

"Guilty? About what do you feel guilty?"

"I don't know, I can't say."

"But guilt is surely something that can always be established? You must have a reason."

"No, no reason . . . least there's none I can think of."

I see my chance here, though I feel completely in the dark.

"You've perhaps some . . . some love-problem?"

"No, no, I've not—I mean not any more than before."

Not any more than before. What a curious way of putting it. The girl must be less than

twenty years of age and yet she talks as though this is something she's quite accustomed to.

"I just wanted to come and see you", she says, raising her damp face and looking me in the eyes.

"But . . ." I begin and then look round the room, not knowing what to say.

"I just thought, like, you're in charge and I should come and see you."

"This feeling of guilt", I say, "you don't know what causes it?"

SHE LOOKS DOWN at the floor again and when she begins to speak it's as though she's talking to an empty room. She might be hopelessly addressing my furniture.

"Only I've always worked hard—I've worked all the time, right from before I did the qualifying . . . hours and hours every day . . . up until now."

She stops and I wonder if this is all there is.

"But now—now I just don't see the point of it. My mother, she died when I was at primary school. . . ."

She stops again.

"Your father is still living?" I ask.

"He is—but he . . . he expects my sister and me to look after him, and he took up with other women—from before our mother died. He'd bring them to the house or else just go off drinking—we'd never know from one day to the next if he'd be home that night. And all I did was work. I had to shut myself off, and I'd read all the time, so there's hardly anyone I can talk to now and I don't know what the point of it all is because I'm sure there's nothing I've done wrong but all the time I feel there must be and there's no one I can explain it to because my sister, she's left home and gone across the water . . . there's no point, it just goes on like this day after day till I don't know any more. I can't see my way and I feel all lost and nowhere to go to, no one to go to, and it's then I start crying though I don't want to. I hate myself for it. . . ."

Her face is streaked with tears. I grip tight on the bloodstone paperweight on my desk and stare at the door. What should I do?

I reach into my jacket pocket and find there is a clean handkerchief in it. I could give it to her.

I get out of my chair—unfortunately it scrapes suddenly on the floor and she looks

up at me, startled. I think of her father lurching down some mean terrace off the Donegall Road, and for a moment I am sure she is going to run away. I walk cautiously towards her, my back is bent.

"Take this . . . you must dry your eyes."

She is hunched on the hard chair and she stares hopelessly at the floor as though she is paralysed by this grief which it seems impossible to explain. She says nothing and the tears flow down her cheeks and drip on to the floor. For a moment I too am transfixed. This girl sitting on a wooden chair near my filing-cabinet is crying uncontrollably and I don't know why. I am bending over her holding a folded linen handkerchief and I feel that for some reason it's my fault. I reach my arm to give her the handkerchief but she does nothing. She shows no sign of recognising me or taking it. I want to speak to her, to order her, but something prevents me from speaking. I can't open my mouth. What's wrong with me? The thought crosses my mind that I'm becoming ill, then I realise that is nonsense. I just don't know what to do. I look down at her again.

Margaret Alexander, shabbily dressed and crying silently.

"Margaret", I say, almost in a whisper, "Margaret. . . ."

She shows no sign of having heard me.

THEN I KNOW I must say her name again, that if I don't speak it she will sit there always in that hunched, frozen posture. If she could only hear me. I want her to hear me. But if I were to raise my voice I know it would be like hearing someone else shouting at us both. His anger shall seek us out—the phrase comes into my head from what source I can't remember. I can't shout. I can't even speak

in a normal tone of voice—I feel completely helpless.

"Margaret", I say again in the softest possible whisper. "Take this . . . take it . . . please."

Nothing. Why can't I be angry? She looks huddled far below me. Like someone who has fallen from a height on to a narrow ledge. She can't hear me calling her. My voice is pleading.

I kneel down beside her. My face is close to hers. Her cheeks are like some patch of pale bare ground washed over by falling water. I smell the dampness of her tears. I see her puckered mouth. I begin to edge closer to her on my knees. Her right hand is clenched.

"Take this", I whisper, "let me help you . . . let me."

I take her tight hand and touch the handkerchief to her cheeks. I wipe them gently and stroke her hand. But she sobs loudly, as though I am torturing her, and then her hand relaxes and takes mine and clings to it.

"There," I say, "there."

Not any more than before. Her words come back to me. I must forget them. They weren't the point. I don't know what the point is.

I hold the damp linen to her cheeks like a bandage. That seems foolish and useless, but I don't care. We huddle in silence.

There is a rap at the door which I don't notice until it has opened and Maura is standing there, arrested, a sheet of paper in one hand. Behind her shoulder I see Brian MacNamee. His face is drained of its normal colour, his mouth droops open, his eyes are wide and blank. His face is glazed with a complete despair. I know that I have never seen him look that way before. I know that what I am looking at is my own face.

Eric Roll

Has Economics a Future?

Dim Prospects for a Dismal Science

IT IS A LITTLE OVER fifty years ago that I first studied Economics and almost immediately developed an interest in the history of the subject. I hope that it will not be thought either egocentric or excessively reminiscent if I begin by saying briefly what I met in my first encounter with this discipline in the mid-1920s.

I studied at an English provincial university; the man who taught me theory had written only one book, an excellent study of *Organised Produce Markets*; and the curriculum contained, from the beginning, a large number of applied subjects, from agriculture through labour economics to accountancy. Our standard textbooks were a forgotten small volume by Richard T. Ely and, for the more ambitious, the two volumes of F. W. Taussig's *Principles*, perhaps a foretaste of the supremacy which American economics was to achieve later. If this appears an inadequate basis for the study of higher theory, it had at least the advantage that it gave us from the beginning an abiding interest in problems of policy. Furthermore, it meant that we escaped from the doctrinal dominance of Alfred Marshall prevalent at Cambridge, from the doldrums of the Oxford economics of the period, and from the appetite for the latter-day manifestations of Vienna that was soon to erupt at the London School of Economics.

While immersed in the study of the rise and fall of Midland industries, we were able to watch, happily without having to participate in, the great intellectual battles of the time, say, those

between the Hayekians (with what were irreverently known as their "Hayek and Dreieck" theories of the trade cycle) and the Keynesians Mark One, i.e. those steeped in the master's work before the *General Theory* (1936); between the Keynesians and R. G. Hawtrey (who is worth re-reading today by both pro- and anti-monetarists); as well as the fratricidal battles in Cambridge itself between Keynes and D. H. Robertson. All the while, against the background of the General Strike and the great electoral battles that followed and accompanied the Great Depression, we could also observe the struggles of governments to enlist the help of economic advisors in solving problems not dissimilar to those of today. On this last point, the history of these struggles (which, now that the archives have been opened, has been written up by Susan Howson and Donald Winch¹) should become compulsory reading for all students of the subject.

NOT SURPRISINGLY, THEREFORE, 1936 seemed an *annus mirabilis*. The appearance of the *General Theory* almost made one paraphrase Pope on Newton: "God said 'Let Maynard be!'" and all was light." For the next twenty years we lived on Keynes's intellectual heritage both in the field of analysis and of policy, until in the last two decades, confusion and uncertainty have again come to mark our subject.

I HAVE MENTIONED ALL THIS simply to mark my starting point, and from this I want to go on, in the first instance, to ask two questions. First, where are we today compared with fifty years ago? Second, where does Economics stand

LORD ROLL is a leading economist, and the author of "A History of Economic Thought" (1954, new edition Faber, 1973) and "The World After Keynes" (1968). He was one of Britain's leading negotiators for entry into the European Economic Community, was until last year a Director of the Bank of England, and is Chairman of S.G. Warburg & Co. in London.

¹ Susan Howson and Donald Winch, *The Economic Advisory Council 1930-39: A Study in Economic Advice during Depression and Recovery* (Cambridge University Press, 1977).

if one lengthens the historical perspective, that is if one takes one's comparison back over, say, the last three hundred years and, more particularly, the two centuries since the publication of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*?

On the first point, one has to acknowledge many achievements. I am sure that most students today have access to better textbooks than I had. Taussig is worth re-reading, and I am not sure that a student of that subject would not be better for reading his chapter on the "Principles underlying Taxation", than a more austere, perhaps mathematical, modern treatment. But there can be no doubt that, for example, Paul Samuelson, even Mark One of 1948, is a better guide (let alone Samuelson Mark Ten, soon, no doubt, to be followed by Mark Eleven). But when we get beyond the textbook stage, the situation is less clear. If my suspicion, no doubt based on prejudice, is justified that today's students are less rounded than those of half-a-century ago, even when they are more adept and ingenious at applying price theory to all manner of social phenomena, that may have more to do with the state of society and of education in general than with the state of economics.

But what of the progress in the more advanced areas of the subject? At first sight, the achievements seem highly impressive, indeed formidable. Modern Economics bristles with "theorems", "effects"—both "normal" and "perverse"—, "functions" and "matrices", attached to, and identified by, the names of their respective authors so that one feels oneself virtually in the realm of the natural or what used to be called the "exact" sciences.

But do these developments pass the twin tests of progress? Do they enlarge and refine our understanding of the processes of wealth-creation and distribution? And, do they improve the means for the better ordering of human arrangements in those regards? (Parenthetically let me say here and now what I will elaborate later, that I have no doubt that the latter is, and has always been, the major objective of Economics.) Hard though I may try, I can, at best, give only a severely qualified affirmative answer to the first question; and my doubts are even more pronounced where the second question is concerned.

I should first explain my qualification.

² In *The Uses and Abuses of Economics* (Oxford Economic Papers, November 1968).

There are a number of specific issues in the area of micro-economics in which modern formulations, whether or not mathematical in form, can produce more precise statements of implications and choices than has been possible in the past. To give one example: this is so notably where, as in Welfare economics, the application of the concepts of price theory helps to bring out the relationship between the effectiveness of the market mechanism as an instrument for the achievement of collective rather than individual objectives, i.e. where "publicness" and "indivisibility" are important. Whether these instances are as novel, as is sometimes claimed, or whether they are only rather over-elaborated and over-sophisticated statements of elementary propositions in the theory of choice may be debated. What is, however, certain is that their validity, indeed their very meaning, is strictly derived from a framework of reference that is made up of value judgments, of propositions concerning the status of certain social data or of assumptions based on received ideas in which what constitutes a good society and what are the appropriate economic mechanisms to achieve it are inextricably mixed up.

I SHALL REVERT to this point presently, but, meanwhile, what about the second aspect of recent progress in economic analysis: its use as a handmaiden of policy? I must confess that two decades or so ago I shared the widespread optimism in this regard concerning the value of the development of macro-economics. I even committed myself to the view that we may be

"reasonably confident that we shall not again witness the march of the hungry and the workless on London and Washington—or the hyper-inflation that ravaged so much of Europe in the early 'Twenties."²

Today, while the hope may still be alive, confidence in the ability of economic management as such to realise it is distinctly less. There is hardly an aspect of present-day economic problems in the industrialised countries of the world that is not a counterpart or mirror image, or perverse new appearance, of one of the '30s: unemployment; low growth; inadequate or, at least, unbalanced expansion of world trade; barely subdued (certainly not conquered) inflation; massive payments disequilibria; and instability of exchange rates. The catalogue of ills could be lengthened, but the counsels of the economic

physicians seem as confused and ineffective as ever. I do not think that I need expatiate on this: I doubt whether anyone would care to dispute what I have said.

BUT I FEEL the second problem is more difficult. Granted that the apparent great analytic advances of the last fifty years have not significantly affected our understanding of the economy, and granted that our mastery of the economy is not greater than it was at the time of the Great Depression, what then can be said of the progress of Economics on a longer view?

First, a word about the purpose and nature of the history of economic thought. I profoundly disagree with the definition, perhaps more implied than explicit, in Joseph Schumpeter's massive *History of Economic Analysis* (1954). Here, with the emphasis on specific analytic niceties, earlier theorisings are treated as the primitive antecedents of later perfections. I think that in this respect Schumpeter is wrong in his estimation both of earlier economists and of later ones. Schumpeter was, of course, too intelligent as well as too learned a man to regard, for example, Cantillon (1680–1734) as simply a primitive Adam Smith. Nor did he entirely ignore the general social and political setting of the earlier economic theories he was describing. Nevertheless, the emphasis on “analytics” is so great and the profusion of writers great and small that are mentioned so overwhelming, that, apart from a certain pardonable impression of antiquarianism, a feeling of steady progress, a sort of cumulative process towards perfection, is inescapably conveyed to the reader. As a result, the prime task of Economics, which is certainly paramount, whether explicit or not, in Smith, Ricardo, Mill, Marshall, and Keynes—to say nothing of Marx—tends to be completely submerged.

In this rather surprising way, Schumpeter, who so often gave evidence of a highly developed historical sense, in this major, posthumous work joins forces with the more arid “analysts” of the present day. It is not surprising, therefore, that Schumpeter considered Léon Walras the greatest economist of all for having discovered general equilibrium. Without in any way denigrating the intellectual accomplishment of Walras's *Elements d'Economie Politique Pure* (1877), I cannot help reflecting that it is now about a hundred years since that work was published, but I do not detect any significant impact of it on what is the principal purpose of Economics. It certainly cannot

compare in that respect with, by comparison, the amateurish, long-winded periods of the twice-as-old *Wealth of Nations*. Only the not altogether helpful influence of Max Weber's theory of the social sciences could lead one to a different conclusion. Perhaps, in having helped to make Economics a branch of Mathematics, Walras is more deserving of the charge which Stanley Jevons levelled at David Ricardo of having shunted Economics on to the wrong track.

HOW DIFFERENT THE APPROACH of Wesley Mitchell in another massive work which also lacked its author's final care and attention to make it a rounded book. For, says Mitchell,

“economics from the time it began to be organised with some pretensions of being a science, was in large measure a reflection of current social developments, that in the hands of its most notable formulators it was a series of dealings with current problems of outstanding importance. It was worked out into conclusions of a substantial sort regarding public and social matters. It dealt definitely with what ought to be done.”

And Mitchell's treatment of earlier *Types of Economic Theory* (1900) is focused on their relevance to the solution of the major problems of their day.

BEFORE ONE CAN MAKE a final assessment of the accomplishment of the Economics of the last half-century one has to pause and consider what were the responses to like challenges of the earlier phases of the Economics of the last three centuries. After all, if we look at the Mercantilists, the Physiocrats, Adam Smith, Ricardo and the post-Ricardian classics, John Stuart Mill and Alfred Marshall, we can detect in all their arguments a strong relationship with major social changes of the time. This is not the place to rehearse again, for example, the great social revolution stretching over two hundred years by which modern capitalism and the modern nation-state were brought into being, nor the associated changes from the preponderance of the merchant to that of the manufacturer, or from the old to the new colonialism, or from the early manufacturing and trading class to the modern rentier. But one does not have to be an economic determinist, let alone a Marxist, to see clear evidence in the greatest

writers of the last three hundred years of responses to major changes in the general social framework in which they lived and against which the operation of the economic mechanism had to be studied.

Adam Smith is a particularly good example. In the orgy of the bicentennial celebration, his role as the apostle of the unfettered play of economic forces was understandably brought to the fore. But there is much more than this in those two hefty quarto volumes without which his impact might have been considerably less. Indeed, we may well come to regard the celebrated phrase that "every individual . . . is . . . led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention", as less practically relevant than the prophetic words, in connection with his discussion of the emergence of the new American Commonwealth, with which his book ends:

"It is surely time that Great Britain should . . . endeavour to accommodate her future views and designs to the real mediocrity of her circumstances."

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that the last fifty years have seen as great changes as did for example the period after the Napoleonic Wars in which Ricardo and the post-Ricardians lived and worked. The power relationships between the advanced industrial countries have been profoundly changed. Great Empires have been broken up and a large number of new nation-states have emerged with political and social as well as economic aspirations. The industrial balance of the world has changed with the emergence of Japan as a major industrial power as that also of the Soviet Union, and the opening up to modern industry of China, with its population approaching 900 million. There has been a population explosion which is still going on, and the present four billion population of the world is, on quite conservative assumptions of reproduction rates, likely to reach ten billion at the end of another fifty years or less. Trading patterns and their financial concomitants have undergone profound changes. But, perhaps most relevant for Economics, there have been enormous changes in currently accepted modes of thought. These affect not so much ultimate values and principles, as prevailing judgments of practical arrangements most likely to further these.

How has Economics measured up to these changes, both absolutely and as compared with

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earlier periods? I fear that the answer to the first question is certainly: unsatisfactorily.

At the absolute level, I can find very little indeed in the literature of pure economic theory that appears to have much relevance to some of the themes that I have listed. Of course, economists have written about them though rarely as economists and hardly ever from the point of view of pure theory. The justification is, no doubt, twofold. On the one hand it is sometimes argued that these are not really the concerns of the economic theorist; on the other (though this answer is only rarely forthcoming, and then only by those who regard the theory of choice as a sufficient explanation of all the most baffling social phenomena) that the corpus of neo-classical theory can explain perfectly adequately the economic implications or consequences of the events I have mentioned.

This is, of course, a process of exclusion and as such makes it easy enough, with Max Weber, so to define Economics as to elide the problems I have stated. But is this satisfactory?

Take, for example, a recent paper by Angus Maddison on *Phases of Capitalist Development*.³ After reminding us of the explosion of population and income since 1700 compared with the preceding two thousand years, he traces the development of the 16 OECD countries in the last hundred years, a period during which their total output multiplied by a factor of 19 and output per head increased sixfold. But there have also been spectacular changes of ranking within the group, by total Gross Domestic Product, by population, by *per caput* GDP, as well as in the continuity of growth, the incidence of recessions and so forth. It is a long time since I have read anything so stimulating and so crying out for deep examination and analysis in an area of current economic problems that seems to me to matter a great deal. And if I am told that the reason why the apparatus of economic analysis is incapable of giving much, if any, help in this regard is that it is not designed for this purpose, I can only say too bad for modern economic analysis. I believe that many of the great figures

in Economics of the past two hundred years, who took a less restrictive (perhaps as followers of Schumpeter's approach might say, a less "scientific") view of the frontiers of their subject, had a great deal to say about problems of the same genus as the ones I have referred to.

When it comes to looking at problems in current economic policy, less transcendental than those Maddison deals with, and to which I have already referred, the ability of economic analysis to make a worthwhile contribution seems very much restricted to the micro-economic sphere, while solutions of the troublesome macro-economic ones escape it. I do not wish to denigrate what has been done in the micro-economic area at all. I repeat, there are considerable achievements within the parameters of the economy of private choice. Nor would I wish to underestimate the potential application of what has been learned about the operation of private choice and the market mechanism to the solution of some policy problems of a macro-economic character. As Charles Schultze has shown in his Godkin lectures,⁴ there are often choices to be made in the mechanics of policy decisions between the command-and-regulation route and that which endeavours to mould incentives in a direction which will help achieve the desired policy changes through the market mechanism. But the scope of these measures must remain limited. They can certainly help but generally speaking this area—that is, that of macro-economic policy—is still full of a bewildering array of prescriptions. As the inefficacy of each is successively exposed, there is a tendency to take refuge in broad assumptions with a distinct socio-political flavour, often tending towards the extremes of collectivist planning or the unfettered play of market forces.

TO THIS PUZZLING FEATURE of the present scene I must finally turn. For if modern economic analysis is in so many ways seriously inadequate, is there any help to be got from those schools of thought which, at the periphery of analytics, base themselves on some transcendental principle of social philosophy?

Some economists seem to have felt the need for some such fusion and we find them turning to related disciplines, such as the theory of History or the theory of Justice. There was a time when I shared the view that a new synthesis between Economics and Social or Political Philosophy,

³ Presented at the International Economic Association meeting in Tokyo and published in an extended version in the June 1977 *Quarterly Review* of the Banca Nazionale Del Lavoro.

⁴ Charles L. Schultze, *The Public Use of Private Incentives* (Blackwell, 1977).

such as is clearly of the essence of the *Wealth of Nations*, might offer a way out of the impasse into which present-day economic analysis seemed to be leading. When Adam Smith picked out the propensity “to truck, barter and exchange” from the wellsprings of human action analysed in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* as the one which would provide the most relevant basis on which to build his economic theory, he may or may not have chosen a permanently valid human trait; but he certainly picked one that had a high degree of relevance to the emerging social system which he wished to see triumphant.

But what I have seen so far of the more socio-philosophical varieties of present-day economics, particularly in their extreme forms, is not encouraging. The identification of certain forms of economic mechanism with transcendental social, or simply human, desiderata is not easily sustained by either current example or the experience of history. If the idolators of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” are right in implying that there has been a steady fall from grace since the heyday of *laissez-faire* capitalism—whenever, or wherever, that might in fact have existed—one would expect some concomitant decline in the

prevalence of various civilised values. We may not have progressed very far in that regard in the last two hundred years, but I do not think that, for example, current practices in regard to the employment of children—or the absence of the death penalty for sheep-stealing—can be taken as evidence that we have retrogressed.

As for the current scene, I find it on the one hand very hard indeed to accept the view that a higher kind of human being will emerge from a type of society simply because it does not allow private ownership of equity capital, or insists that the supply of bicycles to a particular area must be determined as part of a central plan. Nor, on the other hand, despite the present resurgence of the Chicago-Salzburg axis, can I bring myself to include freely floating exchange rates or the fixed rate of growth of the money supply among the indispensable requirements of a free and civilised society.

WHAT, THEN, IS the answer? Is it, as some might say, that it is precisely because of the unsatisfactory nature of the tie-up between certain economic policies and larger social

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objectives that one ought to go on concentrating on the value-free, pure analytics of modern theory? I cannot accept this altogether, because, as I have already indicated, the practical utility of some of the results of analytical work is still very limited and, furthermore, because it is as yet quite uncertain that a wholly value-free science of economic policy can really be created.

So, I still hanker after the development for our own times of the sort of Economics which the classics so successfully produced for their day and

age. But I recognise the enormous difficulties in the way, particularly (as is inevitable today) that it has to be an Economics which has relevance not only to the few highly industrialised countries who share in large measure the same cultural background (in the widest sense), but also to the developing world much of which, in twenty-five years or so, will have developed.

I have, therefore, to conclude by admitting that the prospect for a new 20th-century Political Economy is dim indeed.

Meet Me

... that wall-eyed man
who lived in the tin shed, the floor earth.

The floor earth, they all three (Connemara men)
rose to meet me, from the turf fire, one red eye.

One red eye. After that, the straddled mast,
its aircraft warning light, beaconing over dead woods
as I drove towards you at night. But I was

the wall-eyed man. "I am blind",
you said on the stairs. "Take me there", he said

in the crowded street to me, gripping my arm till it
burnt in the cleft of a tree, and his eyes
were like blue jewels to no purpose. The stoat drank

in the cleft of a tree, because I had
stood silent so long among the wild things
unseeing and to no purpose in the dead wood where

he darted and drank, one red eye, beneath him
the floor earth. "I am blind", she said among

the wild things, gabbling out warnings
I could not hear, and why, because I am blind
and wall-eyed, and on fire. . . . I went back to

where they lay in the snow, making a man,
and she is dust, the floor earth, look at the
white star-wort carpet, and at night's end, the one red eye.

John Holloway

George F. Kennan

A Last Warning

Reply to My Critics



I AM RELUCTANT to enter into polemics with Richard Pipes and Leopold Labedz over their respective criticisms (see the April issue of *ENCOUNTER*) of statements I have recently made with relation to Soviet-American relations. But those criticisms embraced several distortions or misunderstandings of my views which ought not, I feel, to stand uncorrected, particularly since certain of them have more recently been reasserted and elaborated upon by Mr Bernard Levin in *The Times* (London, 25 and 26 April).

1. I am not greatly impressed with Mr Pipes' point that the absence of extensive changes in Soviet institutions over the past 30 years stands as proof that there has been no significant change in the nature of Soviet power. Institutions, as Tocqueville pointed out, are only the frameworks; what is important is *les manières*. American institutions, too, have remained extraordinarily stable over many decades; yet we are a quite different society than we were some time ago. It seems to me that anyone who cannot see and appreciate the true extent of the difference between Russia today and Russia at the height of the Stalinist terror has a very poor idea of one or the other of those phenomena, if not of both. That these are differences of degree does not mean that they are not of high significance.

2. I must decline to be placed by Mr Pipes in the category of those who would underrate or defend what are, in the Western view, the darker and less acceptable aspects of Soviet rule. I was

surprised at the suggestion. I did not think, after several years of residence in Stalin's Russia, that I needed any instruction on this subject. I am even more concerned, however, over two other suggestions that seem to me to be implicit in Mr Pipes' observations.

One of these is that no one could be considered a right-thinking participant in the discussion of East-West relations these days who does not help to fill the air with denunciations and cries of indignation about the iniquities of Soviet power. I have stated my views on these matters, I thought reasonably explicitly, on a number of occasions; and I see no reason for the ritualistic incantation of them at frequent intervals just to meet the fashion of the times.

More serious is the implication, which I seem to detect in Mr Pipes' words, that the nature of Soviet institutions and internal practices constitutes an effective bar to the achievement of an acceptable *modus vivendi* with that Power in the political-military field; that it would be wrong, or futile, to seek such an accommodation with so wicked a régime; that the outcome of the problems of the relationship can be determined only by relentless military competition, to which no end would be conceivable other than some ultimate military-political showdown.

IN OUR CONFRONTATION with the problem which Soviet Russia presents for Western statesmanship, it has been my understanding that the nature of the Soviet system was something that had to be accepted as "given"—as an essential part, that is, of the problem itself; and that the task of all of us who interested ourselves responsibly in these questions, either as policy-makers or as commentators, was not to try to force sudden and drastic changes in that system, rooted as it is in Russian custom and tradition, but to find means of coexisting with it that would spare the world

the horrors of a nuclear conflict. In the objective sense, the chances for accomplishing that do not seem to me to be bad (we have, after all, contrived to muddle along with each other, without war, for several decades). But this does assume, among other things, a continued readiness on our part to put subjective reactions aside and not to let them interfere with the major task at hand. We have, it seems to me, more important things to talk to the Russians about than our dislike of their system or their dislike of ours.

3. I am charged by Mr Labeledz with having abandoned, and even turned against, the doctrine of "containment", and with having disowned the rules I suggested, many years ago, for dealing with the Soviet authorities. I am not aware of having done either of these things; nor can I imagine where Mr Labeledz got the notion that I had. The rules to which he refers still seem to me to be reasonably sensible. And as for "containment": when I used that word, many years ago, in an article that attracted no small amount of attention, I did so with reference to a specific context of circumstances, very little of which is present in the situation we face today. To the extent that such a reaction might still be justified, and to the extent that the various prerequisites for effective American action might be present, I would be no less in favour of "containment" today than I was 32 years ago.

4. I am taken to task by all my critics for allegedly failing to appreciate what they regard as the inordinate and relentless growth of Soviet military capabilities and to recognise its implications for American and NATO defence policy.

That the Soviet leaders overdo in this respect (as did, for centuries, their Tsarist predecessors), and that this presents a serious problem for the rest of us and warrants reaction of one sort or another on our part—I do not dispute. But I would like the privilege of making my own judgments on the degree of seriousness of this phenomenon, on the interpretation to be given to it, and on the conclusions to be drawn for Western policy. I find unconvincing, and often even suspect, a great deal of what appears on this subject in the press and in governmental leaks and handouts. I have no patience with "worst-case" estimates of Soviet military strength, which I regard as pusillanimous evasions of the analyst's obligation to come up with the most realistic and plausible of possible judgments. I have no confidence in sweeping quantitative figures ("The

Russians have three times as many tanks as NATO . . .", etc.) which ignore a whole series of other variables that would have to be known if the figures in question were to have any meaning. I have no confidence in statistics put out with the obvious intention of frightening parliamentarians into appropriating monies they might otherwise not be inclined to appropriate. The suggestions as to Soviet aspirations which appear to underlie both Mr Paul Nitze's speculations on the possibility of a Soviet "first strike" against our missile bases at some point in the 1980s, and those of Mr T. K. Jones about the significance of Soviet civil defence programmes, strike me as highly implausible and unnecessarily disorienting in their effect on public opinion.

If what we need is really a strengthening of our conventional forces in Europe, let us by all means proceed to effect it. I have (as Mr Labeledz himself recognises) nothing against this. I wish only that we would act more, talk less, and not misrepresent to Western opinion the nature of the situation that necessitates such a move on our part.

WHEN IT COMES TO the strategic missile forces, and indeed to all forms of nuclear weaponry, a different situation prevails. Here, my critics and I probably do have a head-on conflict of views. Let there be no unclarity about it: I profoundly deplore the cultivation of nuclear weapons. I consider the mere fact of their existence in human hands to be in itself a greater danger than any of the political issues involved in the East-West relationship. I deplore my government's commitment to their first use in any large-scale military encounter. I view the numbers of such weapons now in the hands of the American and Soviet armed forces as fantastic quantities of overkill, in the face of which quantitative comparisons become essentially meaningless. I must totally reject the suggestion that any war fought with these great arsenals, or with ones even a tenth their size, could be "winnable"—that it could be, in fact, anything less than a catastrophe of apocalyptic dimensions for all concerned, and millions not concerned. I refuse, finally, to believe that the NATO countries would not have it within their means to assure their security in a military environment wholly devoid of these weapons, if they wished to do so. If this be treason in the eyes of others, they may make the most of it.

5. Both my critics take me to task for describing Mr Brezhnev as a man of peace. They produce

long lists of alleged Soviet misdeeds in other parts of the world (Czechoslovakia, China, Rumania, Egypt, Syria, Viet Nam, Somalia, Ethiopia, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and Korea are all mentioned in this connection) to refute that description.

My statement had reference, of course (and I should think this would have been clear to anyone), to Brezhnev's obvious disinclination, and that of his colleagues, to see Russia become involved in a major war with the Western Powers. Does this really need substantiation? I do not recall that the Soviet Union, for all its inflammatory rhetoric, has ever, at any time in its history, attacked a major adversary. That too, actually, is not in the Russian tradition. The years since 1945 represent, if I am not mistaken, the longest period of peace Russia has known in the last two centuries. And not once in this period has the Soviet Union (in marked contrast with the United States) sent its own forces abroad for combat purposes.

Equally obviously, this has not ruled out efforts to influence—with arms, advisers, and political agitators—developments in Third World countries. Of course, some of these interventions, such as those in Angola and Ethiopia, are mischievous and undesirable. Even more serious, in my view, is the encouragement that we must assume to have been forthcoming from the Soviet side for the heavy Cuban involvement in these situations. Such actions are indeed a serious disservice to American-Soviet relations. The fact that they are probably designed primarily with a view to meeting Chinese competition for leadership in the "anti-imperialist" movements of the Third World, rather than just making trouble for the United States, does not appreciably diminish their offensiveness. I accept them as a highly regrettable limiting factor in the relationship, justifying whatever effective direct action the United States can mount to obviate the more harmful of their intended results.

I SEE NO REASON, on the other hand, for their over-dramatisation, or for ignoring the rather spectacular series of failures that similar Soviet efforts, particularly in Africa, have suffered in the past. And I would feel more sanguine about the possibilities for American protest and counter-action if I could detect a greater difference in principle between these actions and ones which the United States has itself conducted on a

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number of occasions. Unless we propose to establish the principle that the shipment of massive quantities of arms, instructors, etc., to Third World countries, including ones in the immediate proximity of the Soviet Union, should be some sort of American monopoly, justifiable on the grounds of our claim to a superior virtue (a principle not likely to meet with wide agreement anywhere in the world), we will have to limit our indignation over Soviet actions to such of them as we ourselves do not claim the right to perform when it suits our own purposes.

6. I am not raising any demand for general intimacy with the Soviet Union across the board. I know the limitations of this relationship as well as my critics do. I would be satisfied if we might be permitted to pursue in normal tranquillity the various possibilities for useful exchanges in the cultural and scientific fields (where such efforts were, until recently, not going badly), and the joint efforts to bring under some sort of control the insane, expensive and dangerous competition in the development of nuclear and other weaponry.

Whether, or to what extent, the various hard-liners in the United States and elsewhere have meant to frustrate these efforts, I cannot say. But the pressures they have brought to bear have certainly had this effect, and this to a not inconsiderable degree. Soviet-American relations have already suffered a palpable deterioration; and the end of the process seems not to be in sight. As things now stand, the area of collaboration must be expected to be further reduced, the area of conflict expanded. It is most doubtful that there will be anything like an effective new SALT agreement; and even if there should be, it would scarcely inhibit, in the present climate, the feverish development of new weapons systems behind the scenes. As things now stand, there is nothing in the cards but a new access of desperation in the arms race, increased militarisation of thinking on both sides, and a rapid return to the rhetorical climate of the Cold War and the brinkmanship associated with the name of John Foster Dulles.

THE FAULT for all of this is, of course, not all on one side; I just wish we had less of it.

My critics, I must assume, are able to discern virtues in this trend of events. I must confess myself unable to do so.

Martin Esslin

Reiner Kunze, a Poet from "Prussia"

A Preface with Some Stories



THE POET Reiner Kunze—who applied for an exit visa from the DDR when he could no longer endure the harassment he, his wife and his teenage daughter had been subjected to, and who was (to his own and everyone else's surprise) immediately granted such a permit in the spring of 1977—should, in theory, have been an ideal product of that new socialist society and predestined to be its ideal loyal citizen. The son of a miner, he comes from perfect German working-class stock and, born in August 1933, he was not yet twelve-years-old when Hitler's *Reich* collapsed and was quite ready to be moulded by the totalitarian educational system of the new Communist East German state. Indeed, he undeniably benefited from the great opportunities offered to gifted young men of proletarian origin. From 1951 to 1955 he studied philosophy and journalism at Leipzig university and then, from 1955 to 1959 worked there as a teaching assistant and graduate student. So he seemed all set for a splendid career as an academic, an intellectual, and a writer. But Reiner Kunze was writing poetry:

"Twenty years ago [he recently said] when I was a teaching assistant at the University my superior had me called in and said: 'So, you write poems!' He had them lying in front of him, in printed form. And after a silence, which in my memory appears to have been a very long one, he said: 'Well, well, you too will one day regain your reason.' With that I was dismissed."

In fact Kunze realised that he had embarked on the wrong road in choosing to go in for a writing career. Doubts had arisen in his mind. And the result was a kind of nervous breakdown. He left the university and took up a series of manual jobs. But he continued writing poetry and eventually succeeded in earning a living as a

free-lance writer and translator. He settled in the small Thuringia town of Greiz.

ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES with which totalitarian education has to contend in Europe is the richness and diversity of inherited cultural traditions in the old continent. In Kunze's case one of the decisive influences on the development of his thinking and sensibility came, ironically, from another supposedly Communist country, Czechoslovakia.

"On a postcard addressed to Radio Leipzig one day a lady from Ustí nad Labem asked for the text of a poem by a certain Kunzl which she had heard over the air. I imagined it was some elderly German woman, perhaps a German scholar, for the postcard was written in perfect German. I sent the poem off and received a four-page letter in reply. The lady was of my own age, a Czech medical doctor. A phenomenal correspondence developed between us which reached four hundred letters, among them some of up to 25 pages. We also exchanged photographs and my lady correspondent—very typically—sent me one which showed her at the age of seventeen and must be the most unflattering portrait of her that can be imagined.

But I did not care what this woman looked like. Without ever having seen her—it was impossible at that time to get across the frontier as a private traveller—I rang her up one night and asked her to marry me. And she agreed without any hesitation. When I finally succeeded in getting to Prague for three days with a tour, I faced a decidedly beautiful and charming woman on the airport, while she later admitted that she had recognised me from the old-fashioned long overcoat I had worn in my photograph. I thus married into Czechoslovakia.

But as we could not be married at the beginning, because at that time a Czechoslovak citizen could not marry a foreigner without the personal permission of the Minister of the Interior and we could not obtain such a

permission in spite of all efforts—we appealed to all kinds of authorities including Otto Grotewohl in person—I lived in Czechoslovakia for a while. This also required the most elaborate tricks as one's visa had to be prolonged again and again.

It was in this period that I began to translate Czech poetry. I sent the first collection of these translations which appeared in 1961 in Berlin to the Czech Writers' Union with a letter in which I described all the efforts we had vainly undertaken to get permission to marry. The Writers' Union scented a potentially useful translator of Czech poetry for the future, mobilised all nationalistic arguments and got us the permit to be married.

So my wife was my first and most precious literary prize."

But even more important perhaps for Kunze's development as a poet was his acquaintance with Czech literature: "It meant a kind of human resurrection for me . . ." For Czech literature, more than German, grows out of a soil of genuine concern for human values, out of a deeply liberal tradition.

Kunze's poetry, which is concise, epigrammatic and deeply personal, was published in the *DDR* and even appeared in official anthologies. But as a *Dictionary of Literature* published in 1972 remarked:

"Kunze's subsequent development became more problematic as he distanced himself from social reality which led to substantial losses of artistic impact."

In 1976 Kunze published his slim volume of prose sketches about social realities in the *DDR*—in West Germany. This book is mainly concerned with the impact of life and education in the *DDR* on children and teenagers. It is called *Die Wunderbaren Jahre* after a remark of Truman Capote's in *The Grass Harp*:

"I was eleven, then I was sixteen, Though no honours came my way, those were the lovely years . . ."

DIE WUNDERBAREN JAHRE became a best-seller in the West German Federal Republic. It is a very unusual best-seller: a quiet, gentle collection of prose sketches, too short to be called stories, too factual, even documentary, to be called prose-poems, although the language is fastidiously sparse and precise. "Snapshots of social reality" might be the most appropriate

description of these pieces.

That they are based on personal experience, above all the school experience of Kunze's teenage daughter, is beyond doubt. And it was the harassment of his daughter at her school rather than his own difficulties with the authorities which finally induced Reiner Kunze to apply for an exit permit.

Die Wunderbaren Jahre is, paradoxically, an almost totally unpolitical book. There is not a word of criticism of Marxism, or the Communist system, or socialist ideology in it. All it attacks is the authoritarian atmosphere—the Prussian spirit, the disciplinarian, militaristic attitude—which prevails in the educational system and the state bureaucracy of the *DDR*. All the more revealing is the reaction of the *DDR*'s authorities against this attack upon the remnants of the Prussian spirit which, originally, the Revolution in Eastern Germany undertook to abolish and to eradicate. Critical spirits like Bertolt Brecht, Arnold Zweig, Thomas and Heinrich Mann supported the *DDR* precisely because they hoped that a socialist Germany would destroy the image of the German Nation as a land of rigid disciplinarian militarists. Had not the Nazis reviled the Communists as *vaterlandslose Gesellen*, wretches without any patriotism, because they campaigned on an anti-militaristic and anti-Prussian platform.

Now the wheel seems to have come full circle. The new "socialist" Germany expels a writer who very gently points to remnants of Prussian authoritarianism and the manic, militaristic insistence on order and discipline in its system of government.

Once again we see that history, tradition, and national character are stronger factors than Marxist theory would have postulated. A Communist Russia gradually reverted to the Byzantine features of the Tzarist Empire with its bureaucracy, corruption, and rigid police-state methods. And an East Germany which occupies most of the territory of the old Prussian state has grown into the legitimate heir of King Frederick William the First and his tall grenadiers who were ready to march into an abyss if the officer overlooked shouting "*Halt!*", before they reached the brink. Small wonder that of all the countries of the Soviet Empire in Europe the East Germans have emerged as the most loyal and the most dedicated. Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Rumanians, and even Bulgarians have traditions that blend far less readily with totalitarian militarism than Prussia's spiritual inheritance.

The Wonderful Years

Six-Year-Old

HE is piercing tin soldiers with pins. He drives the pins into their stomachs until their points come out at the back. He drives the pins into their backs until they come out of their chests.

They fall.

"And why are you doing it to these tin soldiers?"

"Don't you see? They're not ours."

Seven-Year-Old

IN EACH HAND he holds a gun, at his chest there hangs a toy machine pistol.

"What does your mother say to these weapons?"

"She bought them for me."

"What for?"

"Against the evil men."

"And who is good?"

"Lenin."

"Lenin? Who is Lenin?"

He thinks hard but does not know how to answer.

"You don't know who Lenin is?"

"He's the captain."

Nine-Year-Old

PARSON: "Let's assume you had a visit from your uncle in America"

FIRST PUPIL: "Impossible. He would be shot, immediately, by our Panzers."
(With the gesture of a soldier using a machine gun) "*Eeng-peng-peng-peng!*" (The other pupils laugh.)

PARSON: But why?"

FIRST PUPIL: "The Americans are the enemy."

PARSON: "But what about Angela Davis? Didn't you make a wallnewspaper about Angela Davis?"

FIRST PUPIL: "She isn't an American. She is a Communist."

SECOND PUPIL: "Nonsense. She is a Negro."

Eleven-Year-Old

"I've been elected into the Group Council", says the boy as he thrusts his fork into the pieces of ham. The man who ordered the meal for him is silent. "I am responsible for socialist defence training", says the boy.

"For what?"

"Socialist Defence Training." He is sucking macaroni from his lower lip.

"And what do you have to do?"

"I prepare manoeuvres and so on."

Twelve-Year-Old

"I've just missed being trained in pistol shooting, the real thing you know, on the sharpshooter's range. One can take the tram there, the officer said. He appeared in the middle of the Russian class; suddenly the door opened and he asked who'd like to go in for pistol shooting. . . . I was the first to put up my hand, but the trouble is I just have a few impulses too many. . . . You have to breathe out for fifteen seconds and to hold the pistol into a hole, with your arms fully stretched, and then they can read off quite accurately how many impulses you have. And do you know how heavy that thing is? One kilo and three hundred grams. . . . One of the boys really had bad luck, I can tell you. He had amazingly few impulses, something really rare, and do you know what? His hand was too small so his finger couldn't reach the trigger."

Order to Shoot

"I'll drive over to father, he says, and takes the motor bike and I am thinking why doesn't he come back, where can he be, and gradually I get restless and then these people come and tell me I should come to P . . . he wanted to cross the border and they've caught him. So I took the next train to P . . . , he had already confessed, they said, and when I couldn't control myself any longer and the tears came into my eyes they told me, don't worry, my good woman, your Gerhard is alive, he has eaten well and now he's asleep. And if it had happened during his military service it would have been much worse. He had just passed his school-leaving exam, you know, and would have had to report for call-up on Monday And then, on Monday afternoon, the local people call and tell me to go to P . . . on Tuesday. And I bake a cake, go shopping, and then, when I get to P . . . they say: didn't your local people tell you, he's hanged himself. With his underpants. And that they had given him a piece of paper, whether he didn't want to write me a few lines, but that he'd refused. How he could have done that to me. . . . And I am not allowed to see him, only briefly, before the service, at the prison. All they can let me have is the urn."

Image of Man

TEACHER: "You always come to school in such dirty pullovers."

SCHOOLGIRL: "Excuse me, but I regard this as an insult to my mother."

TEACHER: "I am not saying that the pullovers are unwashed. But you are wearing such dark colours."

SCHOOLGIRL: "I am fair-haired."

TEACHER: "I want the students in my form to wear optimistic colours. Besides, your hair looks untidy."

SCHOOLGIRL: "I comb my hair several times a day."

TEACHER: "But the parting in the middle is not straight."

The place: The Grammar School at G. The time: 233 years after the demise of King Frederick William the First of Prussia.

Order

THE boys and girls who had settled down on a corner bench in the deserted railway station had come from a jazz concert. Their conversation soon ebbed away. One after the other they inclined their head against their neighbour's shoulder. The first train was due to depart at 4.46 a.m.

Two transport-policemen, an Alsatian dog on the lead, appeared in the doorway, proceeded towards the bench and tugged the sleepers by their sleeves. "Either you sit up straight or you leave the station. We must have order!"

"What do you mean by order?" asked one of the boys after he had sat up. "As you can see, each of us immediately found his own head on his own shoulders again."

"If you get fresh with me, you'll be out straight away. Do you get that?" The policemen continued on their round.

The young people leaned to the other side. After ten minutes the patrol returned and threw them out of the station.

Outside a fine rain drizzled down. The hand of the big clock on the tower fell upon the figure One like a rubber truncheon.

Pardon

TO the English lessons which she is taking privately from an elderly Miss she carries her books in a shoulder-bag of rough unbleached linen, cut in the style of a soldier's kitbag and covered with lettering in English. As she returned one afternoon from her English lesson and entered the school her form master discovered the bag and took her to task. He presumed he could assume, he says, that someone who parades in the streets wearing a piece of US military equipment was showing certain sympathies and that such sympathies were incompatible with the claim to be allowed to attend grammar school in a socialist state. And whether she were of the opinion that such behaviour could possibly be pardoned.

She looked at him from the corner of her eye, tangentially, and remained silent.

The parents are asked to see the headmaster.

The inscription on the bag is as follows:

INFANTRY TROOPER'S KIT

Instructions for use

1. Kit must always be a mess.
2. Records only—no books.
3. Keep bottom clean for pens.
4. Carry no bomb—fill with love letters.
5. Fight for peace and do not fall except in love.

Fellow Students

SHE felt the population at large, that is to say her friends at school, ought at all costs to get a glimpse of the coloured picture postcard she had been sent from Japan: Tokyo shopping-street at night. She took the card to school and the population at large blew chewing-gum bubbles between their teeth as they beheld the exotic scene.

In the break the teacher issued a severe reprimand to her. One of her fellow pupils had informed him that she had been conducting propaganda for the capitalist system on school premises.

Element

ON TO the bookshelf in his room in the apprentices' hostel Michael put a Bible. Not because he is religious, but because he wanted to read the book at last. The instructor, however, drew his attention to the fact that there was no place for a Bible on the bookshelf of a socialist hostel. Michael refused to take the Bible from the shelf. Which hostel is not socialist, he asked. And as in a socialist state each hostel is socialist and as it is not part of the duties of the church to train skilled chemical workers, he concluded that in a socialist country nobody could become a skilled worker in the chemical industry who insisted on putting a Bible on his bookshelf in the apprentices' hostel. This logical chain of reasoning which he put forward under the protection of the Lessing Medal awarded to him in his tenth school-year (As in all subjects) led him straight to the presence of the Headmaster. The Bible disappeared and Michael continued to think along logical lines. But the instructor in civics began to classify him among those elements which do not occur in Mendeleyev's periodical table and which can be defined by the adjective "unreliable."

2.

ONE EVENING Michael was summoned to the guard room. A gentleman in civilian clothes put a text before him in which someone called "*I*" undertook not to enter the capital city during the World Festival of Youth and Students, and asked him to sign it. Why? asked Michael. The man looked at him as though he had not heard the question.—He was going on holiday during the World Youth Festival, Michael said, and under his bed there stood a pair of brand-new mountaineering boots which he had certainly not acquired to climb the Television Tower on the Alexanderplatz. During the World Youth Festival he would be abroad.—In that case, said the man, he could sign; and he put the ballpoint pen which lay next to the piece of paper right across it.—But why? asked Michael. That wording sounded like a confession of some guilt. He was not aware of any guilt. Apart from once having almost hitch-hiked in a Volkswagen Beetle with a West Berlin number plate. At that time the police had made inquiries about him at school. But that, he felt, was no reason why he should sign a declaration that he would not go to Berlin during the World Youth Festival.—What is a reason and what is not, said the man, was not what was under discussion here. What was under discussion was his signature.—But a reason must be given, said Michael.—What must or must not be, said the man, was solely derived from the fact that in this State the Workers and Peasants were in power. Hence it was advisable not to make a fuss. Michael began to be afraid that he might be stopped from hitch-hiking into the Tatra Mountains, swallowed his reply that he considered the words that had just been uttered a threat, and signed. Two days before the start of his vacation his identity card was withdrawn and he was given a provisional identity paper, which did not entitle him to leave the German Democratic Republic and which bore the invisible hint: an Unreliable Element.

3.

WITH the topographical idea of the Tatra Mountains in his head and the mountaineering boots on his feet Michael set out towards the Baltic Ocean. As it would have been difficult for him to hitch-hike from Z. he took the train until K. On the platform at K., on to which he stepped with his guitar on his shoulder, a patrol asked him for his papers. "Aha", said the railway policeman when he saw his document and asked him to accompany him. He was handed to two ordinary policemen who took him to the police station. "Unpack, everything!" He unpacked. "Pack it again." He packed it again. "Sign this!" For the second time he signed the declaration in which someone called "*I*" undertook not to enter the capital city during the World Youth Festival.

Towards midnight he was released. The next morning—Michael had posted himself by the roadside to signal a car—a patrol car pulled up to his side, without having been asked to do so. “Your identity papers, please!” Shortly afterwards Michael found himself again at the police station. “Unpack, everything!” He unpacked. “Pack it again.” This time he was taken to a cell already occupied by others. A small gathering of guitarists banned from attending the Festival. They had been caught with a Wolf Biermann song or with a slogan like: DO NOT WAIT FOR BETTER TIMES. His name was called. “Where am I going?” A Swiss orchestra needs a guitarist, said the sergeant, ironically. He took him back to Z. The concert took place at the District People’s Police headquarters. “So you wanted to go to Berlin.” “I wanted to go to the Baltic.” The policeman pulled his hair away from his ears. “If you try to lie to me again, I’ll give you a concrete impression of what Worker-and-Peasant-power is like!”—Michael was photographed, with and without a headband, and released. So as not to arouse suspicion again that he wanted to go to Berlin he decided to hitch-hike first towards the East and then, down the Oder, to the coast. In F. he met a truck-driver who offered to take him, next morning, unmistakably beyond the latitude of Berlin. “Half-past-seven, in front of the station.” At half-past-seven the station square was all blue from blue shirts and banners. Young people were assembling to go to the World Youth Festival in Berlin. An usher with an armband asked him whether he belonged to one of the groups of fifty.—“Do I look like it?”—The usher returned with two railway policemen. “Your identity papers!” Michael refused to go with them. He explained. He begged. They grabbed him by the arms. A cell in the station. Cross-examination. The policemen advised him to buy a ticket for a fast train and to go back. He protested. He had the right to spend his vacation anywhere his papers entitled him to be.—He need not go back all the way to Z., said the policemen, but merely as far as D. But if he proved difficult they would be compelled to notify the District People’s Police headquarters and then he would not get off so lightly. Two men and a dog escorted him to the ticket window and then the train. “If you get off before D. you’ll be taken into remand!” On all stops there were patrols with dogs. In D. two policemen were waiting for him and asked him to buy a ticket to Z. immediately and to catch the connecting train. He gave up. On the platform at Z. he waited until the policemen approached him. After having compared the passport photograph and his face, they handed the document back. “You can go.”

“Where to?” asked Michael.

Heritage

Because of her often idiosyncratic behaviour she does not always reach the standards which must be expected from a student at the Extended Grammar School.

(SCHOOL REPORT, 30 JUNE 1972)

ONCE—only once—have I regretted the fact that the recurring dream which torments me with growing frequency, that I am still going to school, is no more than a dream. The topic for her homework was an essay on “*Why we must critically absorb Goethe—illustrated with an Example*” and the teacher had said that the emphasis was on the word *critically*. That’s an essay I should have loved to write.

For my example I should have selected that conversation with Eckermann which had touched upon young Englishmen and young Germans and in the course of which Goethe remarked: “The boon of personal freedom, the consciousness of what the name of Englishman stands for and its weight with other nations, is evident already with the children, so that they are treated with much greater respect and enjoy a much happier and freer development, both in the family and in educational establishments, than among us Germans. . . . In our country everything tends towards making the dear young people tame at an early stage and to drive all nature, all originality, and all wildness out of them, so that in the end we are left with nothing but philistines.”

I should have put the emphasis on the word *critically*.

D. J. Enright

Five Poems from “Paradise Illustrated”

vii

To whom, indignantly, the Angel thus:
“Whereas by definition we are happy,
And happiness can only dwell with love—
My drift you follow, I presume?
In fact it’s better than it is with you,
Since not a joint or membrane comes between.
Total we mix, we mix without restraint,
Easier than air with air, you have my word!”

To whom thus Adam made reply:
“Too airy-fairy for the likes of me.
Myself I like a touch of flesh and blood,
Firm mounds to get my hands around.
Sex in the bed for me, not in the head.”

To which said Raphael with contracted brow:
“If touch be what you’re wild about,
Consider this: the cattle have it too.
It can’t be all that marvellous . . .”

Then “Air with air?” asked Adam, unabashed.
“Total you mix? But show me, how—”

“I have to go”, the Angel swiftly spoke.
So speaking, he arose. “Tell me one thing”,
He murmured: “Can she cook?”

xv

“Where are you, Adam?”
“I’m behind this tree, Lord.”
“What are you doing there?”
“Nothing, Lord. I’m naked is all.”
“Who told you you were naked?”
“I noticed it, Lord.”
“Naked, shmaked, what does it matter?”
“You can get six months for indecency, Lord.”
“What’s six months to you, you’re immortal.”
“It might give the animals funny thoughts.”
“My animals don’t have funny thoughts.”
“The best people wear suits, Lord.”
“You were the best people, Adam.”
“The weather might change, Lord.”
“Too right. It will.”

xvi

"I should have ceased at noon
On the sixth day",
He said to Himself.
"I think my hand was shaking.

I should have rested content
With the ounce, the libbard, the mole,
With the stag, the river-horse and the bee.

Would the provident emmet
Have eaten the apple?
Never.
Or the gluttonous pig?
Never.

The gluttonous pig
Devours his rightful truffle,
He waxes fat,
He is swollen with innocence.

But Eve—that evening's work!—
She alone would eat the apple.
And has she waxed fat?
Lean and lecherous has she grown.

The ribs of her mate stick out
Like the ribs of a winter's tree,
Its fruits all plucked.
I should have stopped at lunchtime."

xx

There was the escort, in position,
Presenting fiery arms and flaming brands—
Handpicked Cherubim, four faces
To each man and pairs of eyes to match.

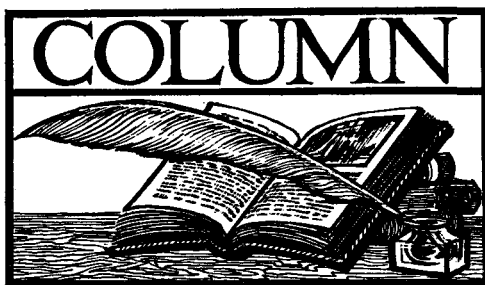
"What a splendid turn-out", Eve declared,
Waving graciously.
"Not like our coming in", said Adam,
Grabbing her wrist.

"Hurry up please!" said the Archangel.
His men were sweating, the Sword of God
Had started the stubble burning.
"We don't want any trouble, do we?"

xxii

"Why didn't we think of clothes before?"
Asked Adam,
Removing Eve's.

"Why did we ever think of clothes?"
Asked Eve,
Laundering Adam's.



WAS FREUD a German? The question seems to be an absurd one, for Freud was an Austrian who adopted Vienna as his home for more than half-a-century, and in addition he was a Jew. And what could be more typically Viennese and Jewish than the theory of psychoanalysis which he invented and founded, and where else could he have found his first patients than among the neurotic, middle-class, Jewish, Viennese women who formed his first clientele?

Yet in his collection of essays, *Freud, Jews, and other Germans*,¹ the distinguished historian Professor Peter Gay suggests that perhaps the question may not be as absurd as it sounds. The title of his book is provocative, and rightly so, for what he is suggesting is that the relationship between Germans and Jews has been something far more complicated than we normally assume, and that unless we understand its complexities we are in danger of misinterpreting German, and Jewish, history, and more particularly the history of German culture as it flourished during the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th.

No doubt, in our view of the relations between Germans and Jews, we cannot help being affected by our knowledge of the terrible fate which awaited European Jewry, including the German Jews, after the triumph of National Socialism. The finality of Hitler's solution of the Jewish problem was so complete that we cannot help feeling that there was something necessary and inevitable about it, and that it reflected so complete an incompatibility between German and Jew that it could not have ended in anything else except disaster; and this is a view which not merely National Socialist but much Zionist propaganda tended to render plausible.

As for Freud himself, he was much less a Viennese or a Jew than the inhabitant of an international intellectual world in which German culture, whether scientific or artistic, played a far more important part than anything specifically

Viennese or Jewish. No doubt he would not have agreed with those Pan-Germans who claimed that the boundaries of Germany included, politically and geographically, all communities of German blood. But he would have taken it for granted that German culture formed a country of the mind of which all German-speaking people were equally citizens, and in this he probably reflected the attitude of his fellow Jews, until they were forcibly excluded from it.

For Pan-Germans and anti-Semites, of whom there were proportionally more in Austria even than in Germany, this was of course a wholly inadmissible attitude. Whatever Freud thought himself, they would have excluded him as one of those unacceptable, unassimilable, destructive elements for whom there was no place, either socially, politically, or culturally, in any German *Reich*, whatever its boundaries. Yet in doing so they offended against the deepest feelings and convictions of thousands of Jews who were no less ardently patriotic than themselves, or less devoted to promoting the growth, prosperity and expansion of what they themselves regarded as their Fatherland. After the First World War, the association of Jewish War Veterans showed that Jews had constituted 2% of all those who had served in the armed services, which corresponded exactly to the proportion of Jews in the German population as a whole. To us today, knowing what finally happened, this may seem strange, particularly because the First World War probably constituted the turning point in the relationships that had hitherto subsisted between Germans and Jews. But it was quite simply the reflection of the degree to which, by 1914, Jews had come to feel themselves to be German. Once in Cologne I visited a magnificent exhibition commemorating two thousand years of Jewish life in the Rhineland. One of the most striking exhibits was the jewelled imperial crown of the Holy Roman Emperor, Otto the Great, studded with precious stones and decorated with many of the symbols of Judaism. How could any Jew of such an ancestry ever regard himself as anything else except German, even though he retained, as by no means all did, his Jewish faith?

TODAY, OF COURSE, it is hard for us to remember that for hundreds of years for thousands of Jews Germany was as much their home as Israel is today. Even though they might suffer from the legal discriminations practised against them by their fellow-Germans, when in the 19th century such discriminations were abolished their feelings of attachment became even stronger. And no doubt anti-Semitism was always latent in

¹ *Freud, Jews and other Germans: Masters and Victims in a Modernist Culture*. By PETER GAY. Oxford University Press, £5.50.

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Germany, though it is significant that in the 19th century it never achieved the same virulence as it did in France (where the Dreyfus case shook French society, the French state and the French Army to their foundations).

The papers collected in Professor Gay's book perpetually remind us that by such an oversight we commit a distortion of history, which seriously underestimates the degree to which the Jews had become successfully assimilated and socially acceptable in Germany. Who could have been more German, more thoroughly rooted in the society and culture of their time than, say, Albert Ballin, friend of the Kaiser and chairman of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, who committed suicide after the armistice of November 1918? Or the great *Kunsthistoriker* and bibliophile, Aby Warburg, who had a neurotic breakdown a month before? Or Bismarck's banker and financial adviser, Gerson Bleichröder, to whom Professor Fritz Stern has devoted a magnificent book?² And if it is true that in many Germans the success and social prominence achieved by such Jews provoked a sense of hostility and distaste, it is significant that such feelings were shared no

less warmly by Jews themselves, who felt themselves affronted by the vulgarity and ostentation to which their fellow-Jews were sometimes prone, just as the Wilhelminian Empire itself was.

IT CAN BE SAID that the great mass of German Jewry, businessmen, merchants, traders, professional men, formed a highly conservative body of opinion, devoted to the Fatherland and while it lasted to the monarchy; and after 1918 to the maintenance of constitutional republican government. Certainly it bore little resemblance to the caricatures of the evil and destructive element, *der Geist der stets verneint*, which formed the stock-in-trade of Hitler's speeches or the pornography of Julius Streicher.

Professor Gay, however, also points out that, in their great majority, the German Jews also contradicted what is in effect another caricature of them, though this was as much the work of their friends and admirers as of their enemies. A continuous theme in all the essays in his book is the relationship between the German Jews and the Modernist movement (in music, in painting, and in literature) which exercised so powerful an influence on German culture both under the Kaiser and later, at its most spectacular, under the Weimar Republic. It has commonly been taken for granted that in the development of

² *Blood and Iron: Bismarck, Bleichröder and the Building of the German Empire*. By FRITZ STERN. Allen & Unwin, £11.15.

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Modernism in Germany the Jews played a dominating and exceptionally influential part, and, equally, that Modernism in the arts corresponded to something which was peculiarly expressive of the Jewish spirit. Under National Socialism this view took the form that "decadent" art is Jewish art. In particular, the Jewish spirit in the arts is seen as having reached its apotheosis in the Berlin of the 1920s and '30s, with its rejection of traditional taboos, its critical and hostile attitude to established art forms, the sharpness of the wit and mockery directed against accepted conventions, especially if they smacked in any way of Prussianism.

Professor Gay has no difficulty in demonstrating, with a wealth of fascinating particular examples, that such a picture is very wide of the mark. Indeed, a far more accurate expression of Jewish attitudes in the arts might be found in a splendid remark of Max Liebermann, the most widely and generally respected painter of the Wilhelminian era, towards the end of his long life, under the Weimar Republic: "After all, I am only a painter and what has painting to do with Judaism? (*was hat die Malerei mit dem Judentum zu tun?*)" It would be hard to find as high a proportion of Jews among those who were prominent in the Modernist movement, in all its forms, as there were among the ranks of those who died

for their Fatherland in World War I, or, among those who were, that there was anything specifically Jewish in their influence. Who can really distinguish, in one of the most characteristic productions of Berlin culture in the 1920s, the *Dreigroschen Oper*, between the particular contributions to it of the score by the Jewish composer Kurt Weill, and the libretto of the German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht? It is easier and more natural to regard it as a perfectly natural and instinctive symbiosis of Jew and German, to which any kind of racial or ethnic analysis is irrelevant. One could ask the same question, and receive the same answer, about that other Modernist masterpiece, the opera *Wozzeck*, in which, over a gap of nearly a hundred years, the Austrian Jewish musician Alban Berg combined with the Rhinelander Georg Büchner to produce a work which, whatever else one might say of it, belongs to a culture which is essentially German.

THE ARGUMENT which Professor Gay follows throughout these essays, which however varied their subjects gives them all a certain unity, is a difficult, complicated and subtle one to follow: particularly in an age when any suggestion that there really are differences between peoples and races is calculated to provoke violent reac-

SOLZHENITSYN

The Gulag Archipelago

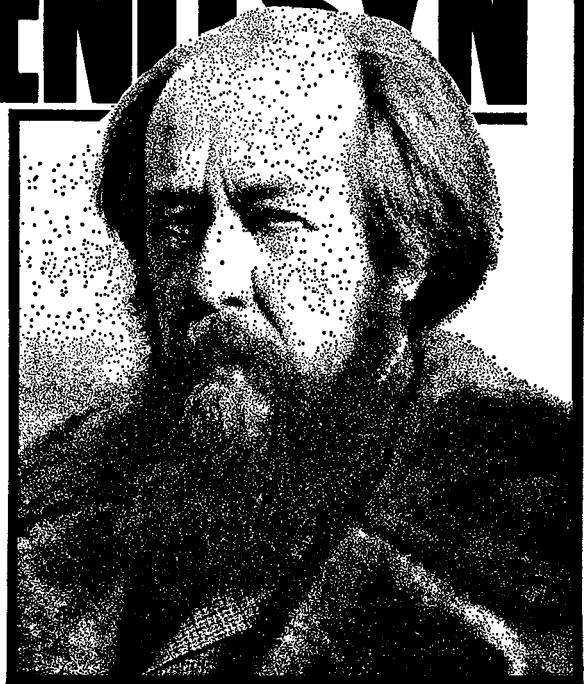
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tions, and even more, paradoxically enough, if it is suggested that, for a time at least, German and Jew really did find a genuine form of living together, before they were forcibly torn apart. Fortunately, he is able to illustrate his argument with particular yet representative instances, and with a depth of scholarship and knowledge, which gives it a compelling interest. In this respect his essay on the 19th-century German conductor Hermann Levi is outstanding, both because it illuminates so sharply the problem of the relationship between German and Jew, and because in doing so it reveals certain aspects of the problem which by now are in danger of being overlooked or have been forgotten altogether.

One says "the German conductor", and it is perfectly natural to say so. But in fact Hermann Levi was a Jew, the son of a Rabbi, for whom he always retained an intense affection. He was indeed, as Professor Gay says, the most distinguished German conductor of the 19th century who was also a Jew. Born in 1839, he pursued his musical studies at the Conservatory in Leipzig, and from 1872 he was *Kapellmeister* in Munich until four years before his death in 1900. Thus in his lifetime he covered a period which was decisive, politically, economically and culturally, in the history of Germany.

As a conductor Levi was sympathetic to the work of new composers and also did much for the revival of old music and for the production in their original form of neglected operas of Mozart's, like *Così fan Tutte*. He was the first to conduct Berlioz outside France. In Munich he was greatly liked and admired; everyone agreed that his outstanding quality was *Liebenswürdigkeit*—his lovability.

Here then, one feels, was a life of high and successful achievement, and a character which won Levi the regard and affection of all who knew him. But alas for Levi! Unfortunately for him he was an intense admirer and one of the most successful interpreters of the work of that musical revolutionary and virulent anti-Semite Richard Wagner, and it was Levi, though a Jew, whom Wagner insisted on as conductor of the first public performance of *Parsifal*. "Wagner", says Professor Gay, "became the agent of Hermann Levi's fame and his misery, his self-esteem and his self-hatred. . . ."

For despite Wagner's admiration for Levi as a musician, neither he nor his equally detestable wife Cosima ever tried to conceal their contempt and disdain for him as a Jew, and this was something which Levi accepted as perfectly proper in the attitude of a German genius towards a Jewish executant. Indeed, he largely accepted the premises on which it was based, so that even some of his German friends felt that in his subservience to Wagner he compromised something of his own integrity and self-respect.

IN THIS LEVI was representative of large numbers of German Jews, who had become so thoroughly assimilated to German life and culture that, consciously or unconsciously, they adopted towards themselves the same prejudices and dislikes as their fellow Germans. It was a form of masochism which in the 1930s was given vulgar and popular expression in Theodore Lessing's book *Das Jüdische Selbsthass*—Jewish Self-Hate. Lessing was himself a Jew; but his book was in large part an exhibition of the very attitude he described and analysed. When Freud was shown the book and told that Lessing was a Jew, he was at first shocked but wrote in a letter, "Don't you think that self-hatred like Th. L's is an exquisitely Jewish phenomenon? . . ."

It was of course from such exquisite phenomena that Theodore Herzl and the Zionist movement wished to liberate their fellow Jews, claiming that there could be no true assimilation between German and Jew. For them, the establishment of a Jewish home in Israel was a necessary therapy for a sickness to which many Jews had voluntarily succumbed.

Reading the sad story of Hermann Levi one cannot help feeling that they were right and later events seem to have abundantly proved that they were. Yet there is enough in Professor Gay's fascinating book to make one feel that there are other sides to the German-Jewish relationship and that its tragic outcome need not necessarily have been as it was. Should one not perhaps regard the story of Levi and Wagner as an extreme and special case? After all, as Nietzsche suggested, who could help being contaminated and corrupted by intimate acquaintanceship with Wagner?

R

Literature & Criticism

It Isn't True, & It Doesn't Rhyme

Our New Criticism—By LIONEL ABEL

LITERARY STYLE did not go unhonoured among us at the turn of the century, but was it for their style that most writers were read? Readers there were in abundance, though few thought that reading could, or should be, an art. Within the fairly large public for popular novels, the question as to which of these had real value was settled in the main by sales statistics, rather than by what critics said. And sometimes the critics said the statistics. To be sure, there were the regular reviewers of books and plays representing in their pieces the main positions held, if not actually taken, by members of the social élite. The aim of such reviewers, and of some of the critics, too, was to formulate or justify an hypothesis of taste resting on the interests—political, moral, or religious—of the socially prominent, limited then in number, less limited in authority.

Thus serious discussions of literary and dramatic works generally centred around judgments of taste. There were then fewer critics on the scene, and less need was felt for explaining new works than for judging, which is to say, for attacking or defending them. Ezra Pound even held—but this was more than fifty years back—that no literary piece was worth reading if it did not express love or hate for a particular work. And there were many others, less keen than Ezra Pound, who urged the critic not to be impartial; for some, he was to inspire, like the work, by an inspired judgment of it. And by his emphasis on certain favoured creations, he was expected to draw a line separating those with a “true” understanding of literature from those whose claim to understand it could be dismissed.

Taste implies the perception of a limit. To be sure, there have always been disagreements as to the nature of that limit, and as to where it can be found or fixed. Coleridge praised Shakespeare for his taste; this he called perfect, implying as much for his own. The French critics, whose taste was quite different from that of the English romantic, found other things in Shakespeare to praise. So there are differences of perception from period to period, also from nation to nation, determining our differences of taste. But in every instance in which a taste is asserted and a limit implied, there is the further implication that those who do not perceive this limit may be divided from those who do. Literary criticism, before it became a field to which hardly anyone can be refused admittance, represented a principle of cultural exclusion: this meant social exclusion, also. The limit perceived by those with taste also served to restrict the number of those who could be said to have it.

TODAY, ALL THIS has changed. More than twenty years ago, the poet Randall Jarrell called his decade “The Age of Criticism”, and he meant the term pejoratively. He did not object to the fact, though, that books were being judged; he made judgments himself, and we still remember his evaluations of Whitman and of Frost. What he objected to was simply that the judges were becoming too numerous: there were more books about books than books about life as it was being lived; there were more books about poetry than books of poems; inevitably there would be more books about the novel than novels to write books about. Now in the years since Jarrell challenged

his epoch, the relationship of criticism to literature has been further changed. I think Jarrell would have been more depressed by our own period than he was by his. The number of books about books increases; the number of books not about books declines. It is now even being said rather widely that the very distinction I am assuming is a false one, and that there is no such thing as a book which is not about some other book. We are told that we are confined in a library to which there are ever more numerous entrances—and from which there is no clear exit. And in this ever-vaster library the number of critical works increases; also the motive for producing such works is now in doubt. We are unlikely to find love or hatred of particular works or authors when we search out the motives for most of the criticism being written today.

ONE OF THE PRESUPPOSITIONS of past criticism was that good critics would give their closest attention to the best that had been written. I suppose the authority for this belief was the respect with which Aristotle's considerations of the best Greek tragedies continued to be held. However, there were some intelligent dissenters. For example, Voltaire observed that there was nothing whatever to say about Racine, since he was so perfect, and this implied that the critic's attention would be more properly directed toward works that are flawed, in which case the finest criticism could hardly be about the finest works. Then too there were those who numbered Dr Johnson's analysis of the minor poets among the major works of literary criticism. These opinions, however, were not very widely held.

It was generally assumed, though, that any acceptable novelty in criticism would be stimulated by something novel in the work considered; the primary locus of originality was thought to lie in the work itself. To be sure, even in the 19th century, this assumption did not hold for everyone. Taine, for example, did not hesitate to explain the masterworks of English literature in terms of the three critical categories he had hit upon: "race", "milieu", and "the historical moment." Taine's work, though, was unusual in the 19th century; since then it has become the model for those very investigations of literature (on the basis of theories drawn from philosophy and the social sciences) to which we have been subjected of late. I must add here that Taine's method did not, like some recent approaches, eliminate taste altogether, but extended it beyond the literary works considered, to include the "races", "milieus", and "historical moments"

causally connected with the works his theory "explained."

IN THE MAIN, there was tacit agreement that literature was not to be used for the testing of new psychological or social theories. The assumption was that anyone discussing an author's work had to be interested, first of all, in its value as literature. Having demonstrated his interest in this regard, the critic might then show that the work could be used to buttress some pet theory, psychological, sociological, or philosophical. While I think the kind of criticism of poetry we had from T. S. Eliot during the 1920s and '30s was in accord with this general view, even his writings were objected to by Ezra Pound for showing Eliot in too prominent a light, and at the expense of the works he was considering. Yet Eliot was advancing no special theory about literature, no startling new psychological or sociological hypotheses. He was interested in a different kind of critical venture, and gave his intellectual support to a particular kind of sensibility, rather than to any particular idea, old-fashioned or new-fangled. From which we may get some notion of why he could say, in praise of Henry James, that the novelist had too fine a mind to let it be violated by any idea.

IS THERE ANYONE teaching in our present-day university departments of English or of comparative literature—and I must point out that most of us writing on literature are teaching in such departments—who would like to have that fine a mind? To have a mind too fine to be violated by ideas would make one rather quaint and useless on the teaching scene as we see it today. Such, at any rate, seems to be the conclusion that has been drawn by many of my colleagues in the English departments of our universities. The important thing in our departments now is not to be able to properly evaluate a book or to be able to rank it in a hierarchy of similar works. These moves may be made, but they are not required. The important thing today in connection with any book is to be able to dominate it with some idea drawn not from literature, but from some other discipline: anthropology, sociology, psychology (behavioural or gestalt), psychoanalysis or semiology; metaphysics or programmatic anti-metaphysics. The domination of the literary work by some other discipline is one of the main features of the university approach to literature today.

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circles, originality, while not always demanded, is almost always admired. In academic circles, where admiration is much less spontaneously accorded, originality has of late become a *sine qua non*. The critic is now expected to be more original than the literary artist whose work he is considering. Michel Foucault said as much boldly and unequivocally: Commentary on a text ought to be more interesting than the text itself. And as the demand for originality became widespread in our universities, it soon followed that a literary criticism would assert itself there in some movement patterned after those which introduced novelty into poetry, the novel and the theatre. The chief characteristic of literary structuralism, and that derivative of it which may not improperly be called textualism, is to be found in the efforts to produce a new movement in literary criticism, one not based on new works of literary art.

I TRACE THE BEGINNINGS of the present tendency to the work of two interesting writers on literary topics who appeared on the scene more than twenty years ago: the Canadian critic, Northrop Frye, and the French critic, Maurice Blanchot. But when I say I trace the present trend to these writers, I do not mean that they are to be held accountable for it. I mean merely that their writings opened the way for the kind of criticism now being practised in our schools, a criticism rather different in many ways from theirs.

I think it was Northrop Frye who introduced the notion into American criticism that the evaluation of a literary work is not the real business of the critic. Value judgments could be made, of course, but their truth could never be demonstrated; and their expression did not indicate the critic's competence. The only kinds of statements about literary works which could actually be proved would be descriptive statements as to their style or mode. Such statements could be made and demonstrated convincingly once an adequate theory of literature had been made available. Professor Frye proposed to make some such theory available to us in his authoritative, often brilliant, and always readable *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957).

The late W. K. Wimsatt, in "Criticism as Myth" (1966), a powerful (though admiring) critique of Frye, showed conclusively that it is neither possible nor profitable to describe a literary work if one is not interested in how the work succeeds or fails as literary art. But Professor Wimsatt's powerful argument notwithstanding, it was Northrop Frye's viewpoint which won

acceptance in the schools. Why was this the case? I suggest the following.

Here was an issue that could not be settled by the power of argument. For the examination of literary texts is for the professional teacher nothing less than a form of life. He has to examine such texts, and *he has to be able to describe them*. He does *not have to judge them*, or arrange them in a hierarchy. The kind of judgment of literary works that was once current in drawing-rooms and in cafés—and in the cafeterias of Greenwich Village, let me add—seems out of place in the modern classroom. Thus it was, I think, that Professor Frye was able to convince the teachers of literature in our university departments, and W. K. Wimsatt could not.

To be fair to Professor Frye, I must note here that he himself never justified the view that ideas derived from other disciplines should dominate the study of literature. Quite the contrary. He had come on the scene at a time when the new critics were being heard in the university classrooms, and he shared with these critics their main notion, i.e. that literary works were not to be looked at in the light of considerations not intrinsic to literature. Like the new critics, he would not, to better comprehend some literary work, set it in a context not already provided by literature. Like the new critics, he was prepared to practise a certain kind of reductionism, but this would not be at the expense of literature. His approach called only for the reduction of literature to—literature. But unlike the new critics he would not perform such a reduction in order to establish the value of a particular work; his aim was simply to be more precise and scientific in his description of the mode to which the work belonged. The New Critics wanted to judge literary works in literary terms alone. Frye did not want to judge them at all, and in so far as he could not avoid judging, his evaluations tended to be rather conventional. Perhaps this is why Frank Kermode said of Frye that he is probably the least original of all the critics. If he judged, this was against his intent; yet judgment was unavoidable in the one activity that did interest him, which was to hold up a mirror to the works he was considering. This mirror was made up of all the other works.

THE SECOND CRITIC WHO, as I noted, has influenced the contemporary trend in an important way, is the French writer, Maurice Blanchot. This writer, like Northrop Frye, denied the significance of judging the works he studied. Blanchot attacked no one. "The bad works", he wrote, "are not worth all the ill things said of them." Just the

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DENT

same, some judgment of value was implied in his writings on literature, for he indicated that in his view criticism was the confrontation of the critic with a piece of writing that had succeeded as literature—at the extreme limit, with a literary masterpiece. But his interest in those masterpieces he discussed was not directed towards showing their virtues, or underlining those respects in which they excelled rival works.

Perhaps his real contribution was the invention of what might be called a *twilight tone* with which to comment, unexcited but eloquent, on his favoured texts. His style suggests, to this reader at least, the evening vision of the owl of wisdom, which takes flight (as Hegel noted) once action, which is to say, history—in this case, the history of literature—is over. If, in the discoveries made by each writer Blanchot considers, there were triumphs, defeats, dramas, none of these are represented in the lapidary, monotonous, and always unemphatic prose through which he remains at a distance from them. What is past he keeps securely within the past. Whereas critics generally try to bring a past work vividly before the reader's mind so that he can focus upon it in present time, Blanchot tends in his discussion of a work to *prevent* it from emerging from the past, where it is to remain, so to speak, enshrined.

All this may suggest that Blanchot is a philosopher rather than a literary critic, and that he is actually doing philosophy disguised as literary criticism. I want to deny any such suggestion. I would distinguish the philosophical from the literary as follows. Within the philosophical, questioning is more important than answering; within the literary, answering is privileged as against questioning. Now when Blanchot writes that the answer is the "misfortune of the question" is his assertion that of a literary man or of a philosopher? His statement here, I should say, despite its pessimistic tone, is after all a literary assertion. It is an answer that regrets being an answer. But however it dislikes itself for that, this statement of Blanchot's, and it is a characteristic one, has the fullness, forthrightness, and literariness of a real assertion.

WHAT THE WORK OF Northrop Frye and Maurice Blanchot revealed to the next generation of critics, though, to be sure, by means of very different judgments, was that the older modes of literary investigation, evaluation and analysis would perhaps no longer serve. Suppose one did not want to follow either of these two writers? All the same they made it very difficult

to follow those who had preceded them. As we have seen, neither of them saw much good in the evaluation of works of literature. But their example also led the more sophisticated to doubt the value of "explaining" works. In trying to dominate these with explanatory theories one might end up being dominated by the very text one was trying to make clear. Thus, the French expert on Joyce, Professor Hélène Cixious, recently tried to show in *Literary History* (spring 1976), that Freud, in trying to explain E. T. A. Hoffmann's story "The Sandman", was subtly led to imitate the very object of his analysis. He was trying to become the author of an analysis as "uncanny" as Hoffmann's tale!

In the past, the explanation of literary works was addressed to discovering some hidden content in them. This content might be psychological or social; it might reflect the kind of data Freud was looking for in Hoffmann; or the data turned up by social and even animal psychologists; and recently, anthropological data have been related to literary texts. All such investigations are, however, subject to the following criticism: whatever is revealed by one method of investigation may actually tend to hide what could be revealed by another; and how is one to choose which revelation to make? It has been said, for instance, that psychoanalytic methods of interpretation can be applied along with the methods of social psychology relied on by Marxist critics, who explain the motives and deeds of fictional characters by class purposes—often those of the author. But it is hard to see how this view can be maintained, nor do we have any instances in which psychoanalytic revelations are consistently made that do not in fact hide what might well have been turned up by social psychology.

As an example of this, we might look at the differing views of Lucien Goldmann, who was quite explicit about his Marxist bias, and a newer critic, Leo Bersani, equally outspoken about his Freudianism, on the same topic (one full of literary meaning). How is it that Racine, silent for twelve years after the failure of *Phèdre*, returned to the stage with such very different plays as *Esther* and *Athalie*?

For Goldmann, Racine's silence for twelve years is no problem at all. Had he not, with *Phèdre*, perfected one kind of tragedy, the kind of tragedy in which God is absent from the stage? Now God is not absent from the world represented in *Esther* and *Athalie*. Also, for the first time in plays of Racine, the people appear. In his little book, *Racine*, Goldmann writes:

"... it was only with the English revolution in 1688, after James II fled to the French court at Saint Germain-en-Laye, that Racine came across a king overthrown by his subjects."

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Apparently this is why God and the people were able to appear in the last plays.

Now here is Leo Bersani's very different view of the same matter. Restating Charles Mauron's Freudian explanation of Racine's silence after *Phèdre*, he writes,¹

"We have seen that in *Phèdre* the haunting, aggressive, sexually terrifying mother makes a spectacular return. She is gotten rid of by the end of the play, but given the son's liberating identification of his being with hers, a potentially liberating matricide is also the death of the child. And it is just at this moment that Racine stops writing tragedies..."

Having rid himself, by a kind of suicide, of the powerful pre-Oedipal mother in *Phèdre*, Racine, when he returns to the stage twelve years later, gives us, says Bersani,

"... that combination of moral and metaphysical self-righteousness in Joad which makes the Christian tragedy *Athalie* perhaps Racine's most brutal play."

One wonders: was it a post-Oedipal mother that Racine rid himself of at the end of *Athalie*? But in any case it will be seen that the two explanations of Racine's silence, and of what motivated his final works, directly exclude each other, and lead to utterly different judgments of the plays involved.

Of course, Goldmann and Bersani are not the only writers on such topics. Very recently Jean-Paul Sartre, in his work on Flaubert, made an effort to synthesise all that could be understood of Flaubert and his works from both a psychoanalytic and a Marxist standpoint. Though immensely brilliant, the work is certainly a failure, since the explanations do not support each other, and are never summed up by Sartre into a single synoptic view. The Flaubert of Freudian analysis (however modified by Sartre) is simply not the Flaubert of social psychology; the first does not contain the second, and the second does not even hint at the existence of the first. We may be reminded here of the warning of Martin Heidegger: where there is disclosure there is also concealment. To find out even one thing we often have to pay the price of ignoring or concealing something else.

I AM MASTER of all I can explain (as Theodore Haecker has said). So no doubt it is a good thing that literary works cannot be completely explicated. Viewing them from one standpoint may

obscure them from another, so that they cannot be completely mastered by any one description. Is there anything else one can do with a literary text besides describing, evaluating, or explaining it? Very recently another operation has been set forth which has already become so fashionable that in a very short time I predict there will be little novelty left to it. But at the moment, the *deconstruction* of a text represents the latest turn in critical commentary.

So fashionable, in fact, has "deconstruction" become that writers may now apologise when they are not able to bring one off. Thus Carol Jacobs, writing on Walter Benjamin's "Image of Proust" in *Modern Language Notes* (Volume 86, Number 6, December 1971) writes apologetically of her own text on Benjamin's:

"This text, for example, adds nothing to Benjamin's. It cannot claim to deconstruct 'Zum Bilde Prousts'..."

In fact Miss Jacobs' whole criticism of Benjamin's essay is that it does not sufficiently deconstruct the affirmations in Proust's masterpiece. I must add here that some of our university critics now find "deconstructions" in works they are *not* themselves trying to deconstruct. Thus, J. Hillis Miller, in his essay on Wallace Stevens' poem "The Rock", finds that one of Stevens' typical intellectual manoeuvres "... deconstructs the human scene..." of his poem.

But what is meant by "deconstruction"? The German term for this procedure, *Abbau*, appears in Edmund Husserl's *Erfahrung und Urteil* (*Experience and Judgment*, 1973) and also in one of his appendices to *The Crisis* (a section of which, *The Origin of Geometry*, was translated into French by Jacques Derrida). David Carr, in *Phenomenology and History* (1974), calls *Abbau*, which he translates as "dismantling", a "helpful hint." Professor Carr writes:

"... the idea seems to be that we can somehow subtract the [elements of] idealization from our present experience, remove or take apart what has been super-added to the world by the function of tradition, and thereby arrive at what was present before."

Now just why did Husserl, who had no animus against science, want to remove those idealisations of experience super-added to it by the sciences? In a fragment on the "Phenomenological Origin of the Spaciality of Nature", published by Marvin Farber in *Philosophical Essays in Memory of E. Husserl*, the philosopher makes the point that in our actual experience we feel the earth to be at rest. On the other hand, the Copernican theory tells us that the earth, on which we seem to be at

¹ In his book, *A Future for Astvanax* (1976)

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rest, is actually in motion around the sun.² Could we not then deconstruct or dismantle the Copernican theory and once again find the earth to be as it must have appeared to Ptolemy and to Aristotle? Evidently at one point Husserl believed the procedure possible and even inevitable, and that by applying his reductive method we could experience things as they had been experienced prior to their idealisation and theoretisation by mathematical science. Such was the original meaning of "deconstruction."³

Is there any reason, though, for deconstructing works of literature? Francesca's speech in *The Divine Comedy* is certainly an idealisation of the feeling and also of the rhetoric of love. But does this give us any reason to deconstruct it? Here I must note the difference not noted by our literary "deconstructors" between literature and science. Literature is not accumulative, as science is. Powerful theories, like those of Copernicus and Galileo, do not remain isolated in the work of these theorists, but are built upon by those who follow them. There would be no felt need to deconstruct or dismantle the theories of Copernicus and Galileo if these had not entered into the very foundations of Western mechanics and provided the basis for further mathematisations and theoretisations of the natural world. One can hardly do physics without citing Galileo, but surely one can make love without quoting Paolo or Francesca (who, in fact, are damned when Paolo quotes—reads—from the poem about Lancelot and Guinevere). In science, each theoretical construction is retained in further constructions, until (as Husserl finally recognised) however we dismantle these, we can still never

get back to experiencing the world as something yet to be described. The world is now given to us as changed by Galileo.

But literature is a domain in which no creator is compelled to build upon what his predecessors had discovered. Is Proust a problem for those who follow him, as Husserl thought Galileo a problem for us? But Proust's descriptions are descriptions of his own experience—no writer since Proust has been compelled to build upon or to develop them. By reading *Remembrance of Things Past* we are not prevented from seeing the world as it was before Proust looked at it. We have to agree with Galileo even when we would rather not do so; we prefer—though we do not feel at all required—to agree with Proust.

IT MIGHT BE ARGUED, though, that "deconstruction" is a valuable procedure for other objectives than the one Husserl had in view. And it might, after all, have some application to literature. So, as an example of the procedure, used with some other end in view, let us take the deconstruction by Paul de Man in *diacritics* (fall, 1973) of a passage from *Swann's Way*. Apparently Professor de Man's aim is to question the way in which the metaphor of reading is used by Proust, and he asks whether this metaphor really unites "outer meaning with inner understanding, action with reflection..." Here is the passage from *Swann's Way* (de Man's translation):

"I had stretched out on my bed, with a book, in my room which sheltered, tremblingly, its transparent and fragile coolness against the afternoon sun, behind the almost closed blinds through which a glimmer of daylight had nevertheless managed to push its yellow wings, remaining motionless between the wood and the glass, in a corner, poised like a butterfly. It was hardly light enough to read, and the sensation of the light's splendor was given me only by the noise of Camus (...) hammering dusty crates; resounding in the sonorous atmosphere that is peculiar to hot weather, they seemed to spark off scarlet stars; and also by the flies executing their little concert, the chamber music of summer; evocative not in the manner of a human tune that, heard perchance during the summer, afterwards reminds you of it; it is connected to summer by a more necessary link: born from beautiful days, resurrecting only when they return, containing some of their essence, it does not only awaken their image in our memory; it guarantees their return, their actual, persistent, unmediated presence. The dark coolness of my room related to the full sunlight of the street as the shadow related to the ray of light, that is to say, it was just as luminous, and it gave my imagination the total spectacle of the summer, whereas my senses, if I had been on a walk, could only have enjoyed it by fragments; it matched my repose which (thanks to the adventures told by my book and stirring my tranquillity) supported, like the quiet of a motion-

² Jacques Derrida, in his introduction to his translation of Husserl's *The Origin of Geometry*, states the matter quite precisely. Husserl's fragment, he says,

"... reduces, rather than '... refutes' the Copernican naïveté '... just as my own body, in so far as it is originarily here and the zero pole of every determination of space and spatial movement, is not itself in movement in that space, even so ... the Earth, that originary body ... in terms of which alone can there be any Copernican determination of the Earth as a body-object, is not itself a body among others. Originarily, it does not move any more than our body moves ... the Earth knows, therefore, the repose of an absolute here."

³ Since the very procedure of deconstruction was set forth first of all by Husserl, it is vexing to read in an article by Professor Eugenio Donato, "Here, Now"/"Always, Already", *diacritics* (fall, 1976), that this very analytical method was designed to take apart Husserl's system. It so happens that Husserl did not have a system. Husserl wrote in a letter to E. Paul Welch,

"May I ask you not to call my philosophy a 'system,' for it is precisely its objective to make all 'systems' impossible once and for all."

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less hand in the middle of a running brook, the shock and motion of a torrent of activity."

Of this beautiful passage Professor de Man writes:

"inwardness is valorized positively as something desirable that has to protect itself against the intrusion of outside forces, but that nevertheless has to borrow, as it were, some of its constitutive properties from the outside. A chain of binary properties is set up and antithetically differentiated in terms of the inside/outside polarity: properties of coolness, darkness, repose, silence, imagination and totality, associated with inwardness, contrast with the heat, the light, the activity, the sounds, the senses, and the fragmentation that govern the outside. By the act of reading, these static oppositions are put in motion, thus allowing for the play of substitutions by means of which the claim for totalization can be made. Thus, in a beautifully seductive effect of chiaroscuro, mediated by the metaphor of light as a poised butterfly, the inner room is convincingly said to acquire the amount of light necessary to read. . . . According to the narrator, these metaphorical substitutions and reversals render the presence of summer in the room more complete than the actual experience of summer in the outside world could have been."

So far I see nothing to object to in Professor de Man's description of Proust's passage—nor can I see any reason for dismantling it. Do we have to fear that readers of this passage will be led by Proust to find the experience of summer indoors more complete than summer in the world outside? Or that other writers will assume the truth of Proust's experience and build upon it? Then why take the passage apart (as Professor de Man does in the following paragraph)?

"The text achieves this synthesis [of inside and outside] and comments on it in normative terms, comparable to the manner in which treatises of practical rhetorics recommend the use of one figure in preference to another in a given situation: here it is the substitutive totalization by metaphor which is said to be more effective than the mere contiguity of metonymic association. As opposed to the random contingency of metonymy . . . the metaphor is linked to its proper meaning by, says Proust, the "necessary link" that leads to perfect synthesis. In the wake of this synthesis, the entire conceptual vocabulary of metaphysics enters the text: a terminology of generation, of transcendental necessity, of totality, of essence, of permanence, and of unmediated presence. The passage acts out and asserts the priority of metaphor over metonymy in terms of the categories of metaphysics and with reference to the act of reading."

⁴ The reader may wonder at the consequences Paul de Man draws from the fact that in Proust's long passage he relied, in one instance, on a dead or sleeping metaphor. The reason is, I think, that Paul de Man accepts Derrida's contention in *La Mythologie Blanche* that metaphysics results from the use of dead or sleeping metaphors. However, the contention is a very questionable one, and it is strongly challenged by the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, in his book *La métaphore vive*. Live metaphors, Ricoeur indicates, are much more important to metaphysics than dead or sleeping ones.

If it is not clear why Proust's passage should be destroyed, it is certainly clear that the purpose of Professor de Man's rather abstract description of it is a thoroughly destructive one. Let us examine it closely. Professor de Man asserts that Proust's passage comments on what it describes in the manner of a treatise of practical rhetoric, which recommends one figure or trope above another. But is this indeed true? Does Proust's text assert any such thing? Does it in fact assert that "totalisation by metaphor" is more effective than "the mere contiguity of metonymic association"? Should it not be clear that it is Professor de Man and not Proust who is interested in the manner in which treatises of rhetoric recommend the use of certain tropes as against others? Proust, I take it, was interested in recommending—but only to himself—summer as felt in the coolness of his room to summer as felt in the heat of the street. But in any case he was writing about summer and not about some manner of referring to it rhetorically. Professor de Man could only be right in his assertions if Proust were not only writing rhetorically, but writing rhetorically *about rhetoric*. I still think he was writing about summer. That last, after all, might be a trope in nature's text but it is certainly not a trope in Proust's.

PROFESSOR DE MAN develops his argument by concentrating on the phrase, a "torrent of activity." This phrase, he writes, is not, or is no longer

"... a metaphor in French: it is a cliché, a dead or sleeping metaphor, that has lost the suggestive, connotative values contained in the word 'torrent.' It simply means 'a great deal of activity', the amount of activity that is likely to agitate one to the point of getting hot. Heat is thus surreptitiously smuggled into the passage from a cold source. . . ."

We cannot but agree with Professor de Man that the expression "torrent of activity" is a cliché, a dead or sleeping metaphor;⁴ but agreement with him has to end there. Is it the case that "heat is surreptitiously smuggled" into the passage by Proust? For that to be so the only source of heat in the passage would have to be the rhetorical cliché "torrent of activity", which, being a cliché, could hardly be a source of either heat or cold, even though it can hint of both. But there is in fact another source of heat in Proust's passage. And this is not a cliché at all, it is a reality: the summer day outside. What Proust has done in this passage—against which Professor de Man protests in his attempt at deconstruction—is to make a whole out of the fragments of his experience, something all poets have tried to do and few have done more successfully than he.

In the particular passage in question he has tried to unite the quiet of his room with the noise of the street, the coolness inside with the heat out-

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doors, and his own leisurely meditation with the activity of those he sees passing by. If one wants to show that this whole is false or invalid, one must show that it was not really felt. One must show that its apparent validity is illegitimately maintained by rhetorical devices to which objection can be taken. But the single objection Professor de Man has made is not a valid one and he has not at all succeeded in showing that the experience which Proust has tried to describe for us as a *whole* was not in truth felt by him to be that, or that his words do not support his feeling. All that Professor de Man has succeeded in doing in his deconstruction, I think, is to protest against any kind of suggestive or poetical rhetoric. In fact he asserts that the kind of analysis he has made of Proust would be applicable "... with proper modifications of technique, to Milton or to Dante or to Hölderlin. This will in fact be the task of literary criticism in the coming years." So lovers of Milton, Dante, and Hölderlin now know what to expect.

AND IS IT TRUE that Proust, as Professor de Man charges, has brought "... the entire conceptual vocabulary of metaphysics ..." into his text? Is it not really the case that Professor de Man has brought a good deal of the conceptual vocabulary of linguistics into his consideration of Proust's text, in which, as a matter of fact, there is very little of the conceptual vocabulary of metaphysics (though the thought in it does have some relation to metaphysical thinking, as, for that matter, Professor de Man's strictures on it also have). For one thing, Professor de Man does not scruple to idealise the differences between metonymy and metaphor, and such idealisation of the distinction between them is metaphysical through and through. All idealisations of our experience or of our categories for judging it are metaphysical; but if we cannot eliminate such idealisations from the natural sciences, then how are we going to object to them in literature, or in the criticism of literature? Eugen Fink, who was intimate with Husserl when the philosopher first wrote of deconstructing the Copernican theory, and who was also acquainted with the philosopher's disillusioning recognition that any such deconstruction would be quite useless, finally told us that there is not a single blade of grass which can be considered independently of the thought of Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Hegel. Then how could their thought be absent from Proust's description of a summer's day from his room? Or, once again, from Professor de Man's deconstruction of Proust's text?

According to J. Hillis Miller, though, we should try to "deconstruct" metaphysics, or at least "monological metaphysics", even if, as Professor Miller admits "... this attempt always fails, so that it has to be performed again and again, interminably. ..." ("Arachne's Broken Woof", *The Georgia Review*, spring, 1977).

Professor Miller analyses in his paper—a segment from a work in progress—Troilus' famous speech to Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida*. Having witnessed with Ulysses Cressida's flirt with Diomedes, the hero exclaims: "This is, and is not, Cressid." Now according to Professor Miller, Troilus in making this remark, and, in fact, in his whole outburst, is doing nothing less than contradicting the principle of self-identity and non-contradiction "... whereby any entity is indivisibly equal to itself." He tells us further: "This principle ($A=A$) has been since Aristotle the basis of Western logic and Western metaphysics." So it turns out that Troilus' outburst is a "deconstruction", and not merely of his romantic faith in Cressida, but also of his sanity, his logic, and even of Western metaphysics and Western civilisation. Now if, in support of Professor Miller's interpretation, it may be noted that even Hegel's system—as integral to Western thinking as is Plato's—is governed like Plato's by the law of contradiction, on the other hand, any single assertion saying anything less than the whole of his system does not for Hegel have to observe the principle of self-identity as represented by the formula $A=A$ which, for Hegel, is a pure tautology. Identity, the philosopher holds, is inseparable from difference; identity, he says, is the identity of identity and non-identity. Shall we then say of Troilus' outburst: "This is, and is not, Cressid", that these words of his are eminently sane, rational, dialectically philosophical? No, I do not think we should say any such thing. We should not relate Troilus' remarks to the problems raised in Hegel's dialectic or in philosophy since Hegel. Philosophy of true conceptual rigour requires a different language from that of Shakespeare's characters and one not possible in any proper discussion of Shakespeare's plays.

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writing as well as by what he says. I do not mean to suggest that he is uninterested in truth as such (Raymond Picard accused him of this); and one might think this to be so from Barthes' book on Racine (many of Picard's polemical points against the book are justified); all the same I myself think it is the best book written on Racine to date and have said as much. Curiously enough, I suspect that the ultra-modern Barthes interests us in part because he possesses characteristics of the traditional man of letters which, from a very strict point of view, may be regarded as faults. I would especially stress his interest in exciting us rather than in persuading us of something he himself finds true. But this stimulating writer has influenced the young critics by the far-out positions he has taken, which they no doubt think represent critical daring, but are also responsible for what I often find faulty in his and their criticism. I do not mean to censure Barthes here for his interest in Lévi-Strauss, or in myth, or in Saussure's significant work, or in Charles Saunders Pierce, or in semiology. These interests of Barthes are justified as such, and have led him to take many of the views which seem to us important. So it is not surprising that his taste for such ideas has not gone without consequence.

But I am struck by the effect of one of his ideas which has had great, and, I should say, disastrous influence on a whole group of critics. This notion of his, expressed recently in his book *sz* (1975), is that reading, to be active and creative, ought to be "writerly" rather than "readerly", and this amounts to nothing less than the assertion that *reading* ought to be a form of *writing*. Now it is one thing, I think, to distinguish between reading because you want to read, and reading because you want to write; Sartre made this clear in the third volume of his work on Flaubert. The writer will read differently from the reader who is not planning to write. But even the writer, who, when he reads, is in fact planning to write something himself, is, I think, *not writing when he reads*. The astonishing claim that he is has been made by a whole group of critics, whose main contention, following Barthes, is that the reader, if he wants to read actively, must introduce an element of writing into his reading of a text. And what this means, of course, is doing a certain violence to whatever text it is he reads, and violence of a kind which to my knowledge has never before in the past been associated with the act of reading.⁵ Is there then no difference between reading and writing? If not, then of course reading is done for once and for all, or, as Geoffrey Hartman has it, in decay, and we would be best advised not even

to speak of it. I shall deal with three of our newest university critics, all of whom quite unashamedly assert, or depend on, the notion that reading is, or ought to be, a form of writing.

PERHAPS THE BEST KNOWN of these critics is Professor Harold Bloom, who continues to tell us that the only right way to read a text is to endeavour to misread it. Professor Bloom has carried still further the notion expressed by Barthes that reading ought to be "writerly" rather than "readerly." As Bloom sees the matter, reading, if it is to be valuable, or to use his own preferred term, "strong", must be not merely reading, but, in fact, writing; the rewriting, even, of what another has set down. On p. 160 of his recent book *Poetry and Repression* (1976) he writes:

"Vico, if I understand him (which in my own terms means if I misread him strongly enough), is saying. . . ."

But once Vico has been so "strongly" read, which as Professor Bloom has it, means misread, then how can we be sure it is Vico we are reading? Was not the text we are reading written by Professor Bloom, or if not entirely by him, then by Vico-Bloom, Bloom-Vico, or, maybe, Bloom-Vico-Bloom?

We have in Professor Bloom's writings on poetry the most arrogant assertion of what is probably one of the main errors in contemporary thinking, namely that it is enough to be greatly mistaken to be greatly interesting, perhaps even to be great *tout court*. The British philosopher Peter Strawson is guilty of this too, I think, though surely less grievously than Professor Bloom; for Strawson's whole career was not quite based on the error he makes when he tells us that Descartes was a genius because he managed to be so wrong. I think this judgment is fundamentally false; it is also deeply rooted in modern cynicism. Was Descartes a genius in any different sense than Newton, who was not mistaken, or Kepler or Galileo, who are hardly noted for having been wrong? Was not Descartes a genius in the sense that in some way his basic distinctions have to be retained as thinkable and *cannot be said to be wrong* (though we may have to state them differently)? For instance, the contemporary logician Hintikka says that the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* represents the discovery of an existential paradox: the subject who says something cannot also say that he is not. . . .

And who else was wrong besides Descartes? Are we going to say that Marx was great for misunderstanding Hegel, Hegel great for mis-

⁵ I may be wrong on this point. Heidegger may have initiated the "violent" readings of texts.

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understanding Kant, Kant for misunderstanding and misreading Hume? Now it was Kant who insisted that the philosopher must try to understand, asserting that moderns should understand Plato better than Plato understood himself. Professor Bloom would no doubt change this dictum into the following: Let us misunderstand Plato even more than he misunderstood his predecessors. Now perhaps there is more reason to praise Tennyson, Arnold, Hopkins and Rossetti for their misinterpretations and misunderstandings of Keats, than to praise philosophers or scientists who misread their predecessors. In looking through Mr Bloom's essays on poetry and past criticisms of poetry, I was interested to see whether he at least distinguished between the misunderstanding of one poet by another, the misunderstanding of a poet by a critic, and finally, between such misunderstandings and the misunderstanding of one critic of poetry by a later critic. But these distinctions evidently do not exist for Professor Bloom. They all merge in his one ever-repeated distinction between reading which is "readerly" (in his terms "weak") and reading which is "writerly" (in his terms "strong").

A SECOND CRITIC . . . Professor Jeffrey Mehlman's much praised *A Structural Study of Autobiography* (1974), with essays on Proust, Michel Leiris, Jean-Paul Sartre and Claude Lévi-Strauss, extends, even further than Professor Bloom has done, the notion that reading is, or ought to be, writing or rewriting. Relating Lévi-Strauss to his predecessor in French anthropology, Marcel Mauss, Professor Mehlman tells us:

"... it is from Mauss, no less than from Marx, that Lévi-Strauss learns that 'understanding consists in reducing one type of reality to another; that true reality is never what is most apparent.' *There is thus a proper betrayal of the text* [my italics] that must be distinguished from that unacceptable violation in which an attempt at identification with the other invariably succeeds only in crowding the 'other' out. It is this *beneficent violation of the text* [my italics] that constitutes the 'epistemological break....'"

Here I think Professor Mehlman has clearly stated how he is to be judged. Proposing to violate the texts he is studying, he yet requires that these violations should be beneficent. Let us see if they are.

In his introduction, the author explains why he brought together the particular writers he chose to analyse:

"My concern has been less to pursue a logical argument than to elaborate a *structure*: a self-regulating series of transformations of a constant system of relationships . . . as we move from Proust

to Sartre to Lévi-Strauss—that is, through three thinkers who have dominated the imaginative values of successive generations of French intellectuals—it is hoped that the textual analysis will assume for the reader the form of a *structural history* of a significant strand of French thought in the twentieth century."

It turns out, though, that Professor Mehlman is not especially interested in the thought—in so far as it is conscious or reflective—of Sartre or of Lévi-Strauss or of Leiris or of Proust. It is in the reflective or conscious thought of Lacan, or of Freud, or of Freud as interpreted by Lacan, that Professor Mehlman is interested. Of Lacan, he writes:

"The Frenchman's dense and hermetic prose style makes him the least accessible of thinkers, particularly for readers who are not French. Indeed, whereas the normal tendency—or error—of 'psychoanalytic critics' is to 'use' Freud in order to 'explain' a literary text, I found myself more often referring to the authors studied here *as a means of illuminating particularly difficult passages in Lacan* [my italics]. . . . this work may, then, serve as a (necessarily) oblique introduction to Lacan. . . ."

So there we have Professor Mehlman's project. However, I do not think that what he himself admits to doing is very different from the tendency—or error—of other psychoanalytic critics. Using Freud in order to explain a literary text is very often using that text as an introduction to Freud. But in any case Professor Mehlman has told us what his book is really about, and how he has read Proust, Sartre, Leiris and Lévi-Strauss: he has read them as introductions to the writings of Lacan. The question is: can he crowd Lacan into his text—which is not about Lacan—without crowding the others out?

Professor Mehlman informs us, too, that Freud was "... the practitioner of the most radical form of autobiography we know." Evidently, the autobiographical writings of Proust, Sartre, Leiris and Lévi-Strauss are much less radical. Then why did he not (as an introduction to the thought of Lacan) directly analyse Freud's self-analysis, which, "beginning in the correspondence with Fliess was pursued throughout his career and, no doubt, in and through his most difficult 'theoretical' texts. . . ." To be sure, Professor Mehlman has the right to analyse whatever he pleases, but we also have the right to analyse his analyses, and here we must note that, in calling Freud "the practitioner of the most radical form of autobiography we know", Professor Mehlman is reading into Freud's very valuable self-analyses what is certainly not written there: Freud did not in fact write an autobiography. That is why we read the biography of him by Ernest Jones. Crowding Freud in as a memorialist is also to crowd out Ernest Jones as a biographer. And, on the other hand, treating Proust purely as an

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autobiographer is to crowd out the meaning his masterpiece should have for us as a novel. Now a novel is something quite different from an autobiography. Ernst Robert Curtius has said—and Leo Spitzer agrees with him—that every character in Proust has his own language. Surely an achievement hardly conceivable in an autobiography.

I must note here that Michael Ryan, reviewing Professor Mehlman's book in *diacritics* (spring, 1976), argues that autobiography is fundamentally and inevitably fiction:

"... all autobiography... is necessarily fictive (just as all fiction is necessarily true...)."

Mr Ryan goes on to attack John Sturrock's critique of Professor Mehlman's book in the *Times Literary Supplement* (18 July 1975). Apparently, Mr Sturrock felt that Professor Mehlman never justified his treatment of Proust's novel as autobiography. To Michael Ryan such criticism is meaningless. Then is the term "autobiography" also meaningless? After all, Professor Mehlman used this term in the title of his book. Is it wrong to think that in choosing to employ it he had something definite in mind?

It is not at all clear, though, what this could be. In his essay on Sartre, Professor Mehlman scarcely distinguishes between Sartre's autobiographical work *Words*, about his own childhood up to the age of twelve, and Sartre's biographical study of Genet, *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr*. Now once again there are surely differences, between autobiography and fiction, and between both of these and criticism. Also, between criticism and the construction of a critical theory. I think no one should be allowed to fill all of these terms at will with the same content. But let us consider here only the differences between the novel and autobiography. In the novel, Peter may tell us something about Peter while documenting us about Paul; in autobiography, Peter brings off the miracle of trying to document us about Peter, and actually doing so. And this is not what Proust set out to do in his novel, nor Sartre in his book about Genet.

Professor Mehlman's readings are often efforts to "read" each of the writers he has studied from the perspective of one or another of the other three. He gives us a Sartre who is reading Lévi-Strauss when he is not himself being read by Proust; a Lévi-Strauss reading Proust, a Leiris reading Proust and being read by Sartre and Lévi-Strauss. All this under very watchful eyes, possibly of Freud, sometimes of Genet, and certainly of Lacan.

Thus at the very beginning of his essay on Lévi-Strauss' *Tristes Tropiques*, he tells us that the author

"... arrives, at the inception of his book, at the very conclusion that drove Sartre's Roquentin to nausea. And, as we shall see, there is a terrible, monotonous density to the 'real' tropics that is not without recalling Sartre's hellish garden. But Lévi-Strauss offers more than a statement of the ill effects of that illusion; and, unlike Sartre, he attempts not to transcend... it."

Professor Mehlman goes on to say that the literary genre to which Lévi-Strauss was trying *not* to contribute is one aspiring

"... to the status of a lecture with slides... the would-be hero acquires prestige through the fascination of an image peculiarly his own... the identification with the image might issue in Jean-Paul Sartre... pretending to be the cinematic heroes he and his mother thrilled to. Were the narrator as well to succumb to the illusion, the result would be Marcel, dreaming his incestuous fantasy..."

And once again, about Lévi-Strauss' descriptions of Provence, he tells us:

"the reader will recognise in Lévi-Strauss' relation to Provence precisely the dialectics of aestheticism that Sartre describes in *Saint Genet*."

Precisely? Not to this reader. And Professor Mehlman does not neglect to give us a reading of Lévi-Strauss by Sartre's Genet. He tells us: "We may suspect that Sartre's Genet, in his more lucid moments, imagined the just man dreaming the dreams of Claude Lévi-Strauss." And here is his version of Lévi-Strauss as Proust:

"For Lévi-Strauss stands before the Tupi natives much as Swann does before Odette. The Proustian passion was to know the unknown woman as *unknown*. And Swann's eventual knowledge of Odette's life coincides with the death of his passion for her. In Proust, as in Lévi-Strauss, there is a critical failure of inter-subjectivity."

At the close of *Tristes Tropiques* Lévi-Strauss asks: "What did I come here to do? With what hope? *Toward what end?*" Professor Mehlman comments:

"For Proust, the answer to the anthropologist's question is clear: Swann suffers in order to inspire a great book. Such, too, was Roquentin's hope, one from which at the end of *Les Mots*, Sartre is not sure of having liberated himself... The continuity of the various enterprises we are considering becomes apparent when it is realized that secular martyrdom is also a temptation for Lévi-Strauss..."

I submit that the continuity of the "various enterprises" Professor Mehlman is considering has in no way become apparent. Proust was *not* trying to answer questions asked by Lévi-Strauss. Swann did *not* suffer in order to inspire a great book, unless one crowds out the actual character, Swann, whom Proust set before us in his novel and replaces him with the narrator, who has, in fact, distanced himself from Swann's fate. And Sartre

is, of course, not Roquentin. What is so discouraging and hopeless about Professor Mehlman's comparisons of the projects, accomplishments and failures of his chosen authors is that he is never able to resolve them into anything clear enough and definite enough to be called a *structure*. His comparisons remain comparisons, merely that, and as such are literary through and through. Yet Professor Mehlman presents them as truths destructive to literature. Now they are not true enough to be what he would like them to be, nor are they literary enough to be truly interesting. Citing Foucault's insistence that literature is a dated term, Professor Mehlman tells us that if literature is, like Lévi-Strauss' totemism, a historically dated mirage, then the task of structural analysis would be to destroy the ideological construct

"through which the mirage is celebrated. One would analyze literature as Lévi-Strauss would dissolve man. . . . The 'structural' and 'literary' enterprises are incompatible. . . ."

On this incompatibility, clearly and frankly stated by Professor Mehlman, I cannot but agree.

STILL ANOTHER CRITIC who insists that reading is writing, or should be that, is

Professor Jonathan Culler. His aim, as I see it, has been to bring into literary discourse some of the wilder insights of Roland Barthes and Roman Jakobson. He is quite ready to admit the new insights into criticism but only after close inspection and careful judgment of them, to admit only that which has passed critical examination. This is the attitude which characterises his *Poetics of Structuralism* (1975), a work often first-rate in its restatement of some of the doctrinal novelties recently put forward in France. Professor Culler is often severe toward the most respected exponents of the new faction in French criticism, and sometimes he is even unfair to them. There are occasions when he seems first to rebuke, and then to agree with their views. This is all the more to be objected to in that his refutations do not always hold. For example, he suggests that Derrida, in arguing against "the metaphysic of presence", may in fact be arguing for and depending on a "metaphysic of absence"; and what do we have to gain by exchanging one metaphysic for another? But Derrida, identifying metaphysics as such with what has been called the metaphysic of presence, hardly has to refute the charge that he is arguing for a metaphysic of absence. He may be quite wrong here, but this would have to be shown, and Professor Culler has not even tried to show it.

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Though Professor Culler is often critical of Roland Barthes, in the main he follows him, and especially with respect to the idea of Barthes which I have singled out for criticism, his notion that reading should be "writerly." According to Professor Culler, "poetics is essentially a theory of reading . . ." and his main effort in the *Poetics of Structuralism* is to develop an adequate theory for the reading of literary texts. I wonder if Professor Culler has sufficiently reflected on the differences between poetics and aesthetics, for surely it is aesthetics that is concerned with the way we receive some communication, as the former is concerned with how we construct one. By "reading", I take it that Professor Culler—like Roland Barthes, Harold Bloom and Jeffrey Mehlman—means "writing" and "re-writing." There is only a step, after all, between advancing the idea that reading can be determined by a poetics of some sort, and the idea, more openly outrageous, that "reading" is or ought to be "misreading" in order to be "creative."

Why in fact should there be a "poetics of criticism"? Doesn't the very idea seem strange? A poetics of the created work does not, of course, need to be defended. It requires the critic to participate sympathetically in the productive effort of the creator. But a poetics of criticism? Is the critic to participate sympathetically in his

own process of conceptual construction? What need of his, or of his readers, would any such effort satisfy? For in this kind of effort the critic would be turned neither toward the audience of the work, as someone interested in its aesthetic effect, nor toward the creator of the work, as one whose interest lies in the act that brought the work into being; the critic would direct his attention neither to the audience nor to the writer, neither to the aesthetics of the work *nor* to its poetics, but to his own effort of critical analysis, to his own "reading", that is to say "misreading", "writing", and even "rewriting" of the work.

In fact, the interpretation of literary works has seldom been required for gaining them readers or demonstrating their real value. An exception, of course, can be made for what has been called modernist literature, produced for the most part early in this century, deliberately allusive, difficult, and not designed for a wide audience. Certainly works like the *Cantos* and *Ulysses* could not be immediately understood, and some effort of critical analysis was necessary if they were to reach a wider public. But even with respect to works of this kind, most of the critics of the 1920s and 1930s restricted the effort at interpretation. They seldom gave us "readings" of these works. They did track down learned allusions, and they tried to account for stylistic difficulties. But they did not substitute global views of their own conceiving for the conception of the author. Those who wanted to rewrite *Ulysses* tried to write novels using *Ulysses* as a model in an effort to surpass that work in depth, interest, creative language, plot, or meaning. And the critics of *Ulysses*, on the other hand, did not present us with their various readings of that work. They tried to help others read the novel Joyce had written and did not foist their own reading or misreading of it on them.

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THERE ARE MANY THINGS to be said about a literary text: its importance can be gauged, its type described, its place found in a hierarchy made up of similar works. Perhaps the least important function of the critic is to present the reader of a given work with that reading of the work he himself prefers. And the least justifiable way in which to present his version of some work is to give along with it an underpinning of poetics, so that the reader will be confronted both with a new version of the work—that is to say, the critic's—and along with this version an insight into how the critic constructed it conceptually. Thus we get, instead of the work as we might read it for ourselves, the critic's reading or misreading of it, and also the poetics of his reading or mis-

reading, that is to say, what Professor Culler has called "structuralist poetics."

DECONSTRUCTION, and reading as writing, or even as re-writing: these then are the two procedures favoured by our newest critics in the universities. Now is there any connection between the two procedures? Is there any reason why a critic who favours the one should also be sympathetic to the other, as our new university critics, Professors de Man, Bloom, Mehlman and Culler, all seem to be? Is there any sense in which the two critical procedures may be said to be the same?

The answer to this last question is yes, which poses a serious problem for our new critics, for they can be said to have a *centre* to their thinking, and they are opposed—or say they are opposed—to the acceptance of any kind of centredness. They are opposed to logo-centrism and to ethno-centrism; the theorist who has most inspired them in their deconstructions, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, is even against phallo-centrism, the phallo-centrism, to be specific, of Lacan. (Derrida himself is accused, by Jonathan Culler, of still another form of centrism: of finding a centre in what simply is not there.)

To come back to my question: is there any relationship between the procedures of deconstruction and of reading as writing or rewriting? Do I not in fact have to deconstruct what I read in order to rewrite it? To make my reading "writerly" do I not have to first take apart what I have read? Professor de Man, in the article I have quoted, "Semiology and Rhetoric", asserts as much. He writes of his reading of Proust's passage:

"The reading is not 'our' reading, since it uses only the linguistic elements provided by the text itself; the distinction between author and reader is one of the false distinctions that the deconstruction makes evident. The deconstruction is not something we have added to the text but it constituted the text in the first place. . . ."

If we are to take these assertions seriously it follows that Professor de Man's reading of Proust's passage and Proust's passage itself are one and the same and can only be falsely distinguished. But in that case Proust's passage can be regarded as a deconstruction of Professor de Man's dismantling of it, and no one will think of it in that way. But I do not want to labour the point. What should be clear from the assertions by Professor de Man I have just cited is that the procedures of deconstruction and of "writerly" reading are for him practically identical. It is no

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wonder that in another essay he has referred to reading as an "impossibility."

THE CRITICS I HAVE DISCUSSED have hardly created a new literature. Are they new at least in their criticism of past works? Northrop Frye, in an entirely different context, has suggested that anyone whose dramatic posture is intelligible to us can hardly be altogether new:

"All lifelike characters, whether in drama or fiction, owe their consistency to the appropriateness of the stock type which belongs to their dramatic function. That stock type is not the character, but it is as necessary to the character as a skeleton is to the actor who plays it."

I am not sure that this law holds as strictly as Professor Frye claims it does. I will not say there can be no consistency in a fictional character if we are unable to find within him some stock figure. But in any case, there does seem to be a certain truth to the generalisation; and I think it has some application to Professor Frye himself, and also to critics like Blanchot and Barthes. These writers are men of letters. We recognise in them the stock figure by the carefully cadenced rhetoric each brings to his particular style. While none of them seems interested in improving our judgment of either contemporary or past literary works, on the other hand none of them does violence to the judgments already made of our contemporaries and our predecessors. Fine writers themselves, these critics continue a mode of reflection on literature whose appropriateness we grasp intuitively. But the newer critics, who have taken their bearings from Frye, Blanchot and Barthes, have inaugurated, I suggest, a very different turn in criticism, one in which the counter-intuitive is mainly relied on, and intuition, on which the very life of literature depends, is, in the main, discarded.

All the same, I think that Northrop Frye's "law" holds for these critics too. The stock figure of the man of letters can be found, if we know how to look for it, in Professors Paul de Man, Harold Bloom, Jeffrey Mehlman and Jonathan Culler.

Professor Paul de Man, first of all. Now who are we to compare him with? For all his knowledge and competence it is hard to see in him the qualities of our best scholars. He is not, I think, like Harry Levin nor does he suggest Edmund Wilson nor Kenneth Burke (with whose views, by the way, he often seems to agree). This foreign-born Yale professor does suggest a former critic, though, a first-rate man of letters of some three generations back, Ramon Fernandez, the French critic of Mexican origin, who gave us what is probably the best book written on Balzac and whose *Messages* is still one of the most important

works written on the novel. Professor de Man suggests Fernandez in several respects: his wide culture, philosophical competence, and also a certain intellectual instability. Fernandez showed this in his political shifts from the centre to the left and finally to the extreme right. Professor de Man has shown a like instability in giving absolute support to notions which he then admits he cannot defend, for example, the privileging of metonymy over metaphor, which he has since admitted shade into one another; also by first attacking Jacques Derrida in *Blindness and Insight* and then adopting Derrida's programme and procedures.

Professor Harold Bloom has what the French call *drôles d'idées*, "funny ideas", but the figure of the stock critic in him is very clear. He suggests not one, but a great many critics, in fact almost every critic who has stressed the importance of some ideological view, moral, religious or political, as against the self-evident value of mere literary achievement. Like such critics, Catholic, Communist, or Victorian, Professor Bloom can make his points against a writer without ever quoting him: and when he does quote, it is not to prove a point, for Professor Bloom's points, known to him to be true in advance, are never provable. By what quotations, for example, could he prove that Tennyson (as he asserts) was able to escape the influence of Keats more surely than could Arnold, Hopkins or Rossetti?

What about Professor Jeffrey Mehlman? In his complete fixation on a single idea, Lacan's version of Freud, and in his intolerance of any view contrary to it, he does suggest one of the stock figures not of the Anglo-American, but of the French scene. I see in him a version of the early André Breton, who would pick a fight with you, as Giacometti once told me, if you intimated you could bear to look at a Chardin. And behind André Breton, early in the century, there was Peladon, who when Huysmans' *La Bas* appeared, announced to the French public that its author was ridiculously ignorant of anything having to do with magic or with evil. So even in Professor Mehlman there is a stock type, though one we are perhaps less familiar with on our own scene.

And Professor Jonathan Culler, erudite, intelligent, probably wrong about a great many intellectual matters it is difficult to be right about, with two books already to his credit, the prize-winning *Poetics of Structuralism* and an intelligent, up-to-date volume on Flaubert, is hardly a disturbing figure either on the academic or the literary scene. Surely if there were an interesting new literature to investigate and comment on, he would, I suggest, do this very much in the deft manner of the early Eliot instead of trying to subdue the whole of literature, past, present and future, with a poetics of criticism.

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Hardy's Half-Centenary—By HILARY SPURLING

ROBERT GITTINGS has at last completed his biography of Thomas Hardy with a second volume¹ covering what he calls, with engaging competitiveness, “the most startling old age of any English poet.” As a sequel, *The Older Hardy* is if anything more gripping than its forerunner. It also raises some tricky biographical problems in acute form, chief among them that effect of physical and spiritual shrinkage common to the lives of nearly all romantic artists. Anyone who has visited, say, Flatford Mill, where Constable grew up and where he painted *The Haywain*, will know the kind of disappointment described in Dr Gittings’ comparison of Bampton, Duddle and Puddletown heaths with Hardy’s Egdon:

What nearly always surprises those who form a picture from the novel of this giant waste is how small it is in actual geographical fact, and how little it seems to contain, even in bad weather, of the brooding menace with which Hardy invests it.

Actual fact, rather than romantic investiture, is of course Gittings’ chosen sphere. Hardy’s increasing seclusion, great age, indeed sheer survival after the First War combined with his strange late poetical flowering to turn him into a highly peculiar national monument. Every type of pilgrim paid him visits, from the Prince of Wales and the rising literary contingent led by Virginia Woolf and Robert Graves, down to the humblest bicyclist like Vere Collins² (who kept vigil two nights running at the edge of Hardy’s drive in hopes of glimpsing his hero at a window). Towards the end even the Dorchester tradesmen overcame their suspicion of native talent sufficiently to peddle portrait busts and china models of the birthplace at Bockhampton.

But Gittings’ business is less with the great man receiving homage than with the character re-

vealed in dialogues like this one, recorded by his second wife:

FLORENCE HARDY: It’s twelve days since you spoke to anyone outside the house.

THOMAS HARDY (*triumphantly*): I have spoken to someone.

F.H. (*surprised*): Who was it?

T.H.: The man who drove the manure cart.

Hardy planted two or three thousand pine trees in his garden at Max Gate; he had a pair of “study trousers” which he wore for twenty years and mended himself with string; at home he was morose, irascible and mean with money (“If he does get the Nobel Prize”, wrote Florence when he was eighty in 1919, “we shall be able to have bacon from Selfridge’s for breakfast every day”). As between the venerable seer and the touchy hermit defying his wife to burn his trousers, there is no doubt that the second image has the more fashionable appeal today. But there was also a third party, more often than not conspicuous by his absence, as Siegfried Sassoon reported in a poem about taking tea with “old Mr Hardy” at Max Gate:

Hardy, the Wessex wizard, wasn’t there.

Good care was taken to keep him out of sight. . . .

IT IS THIS ELUSIVE Wessex wizard who is the heart of the matter: some think him impossible to pin down, others maintain that he ought never to be hunted in the first place. John Bayley,³ taking as his cue an uneasy line from “Wessex Heights” (“In the towns I am tracked by phantoms having weird detective ways”), roundly denounces the “detectives” who pounce on allusions to people or events in this and other similarly enigmatic poems in hopes of uncovering what Hardy “was up to.” In his review of *The Older Hardy* Professor Bayley made it clear that it is not simply Gittings’ book but the whole idea of a biographical approach to Hardy that he finds “subtly calamitous.” This was undoubtedly Hardy’s own opinion. Whatever their points of difference, Gittings and Bayley seem to agree that “Wessex Heights” (written in the aftermath of the public outcry over *Jude the Obscure*) has to do with the critical attention which Hardy

¹ *The Older Hardy*. By ROBERT GITTINGS. Heinemann, £6.95.

² *Talks with Thomas Hardy at Max Gate*. By VERE COLLINS. First published 1928, now reprinted by Duckworth, £5.95.

³ *An Essay on Hardy*. By JOHN BAYLEY. Cambridge University Press, £6.95.

simultaneously craved and resented. His feelings towards biographers were not far short of violent: he denounced their efforts, blocked their publication, sent at least two packing in his lifetime and did his best to foil them ever afterwards by the notorious (and for nearly twenty years successful) ruse of writing his own *Life* under his wife's name.

Gittings gives a fascinating account of the twistings, turnings and doublings back involved in this deliberate foxing process. Whole episodes were erased or re-written. Old papers were first censored, then consumed on the funereal bonfires which shrouded Max Gate in smoke both before and after Hardy's death: "I don't mind what they do with letters of mine they get hold of", he said placidly to Vere Collins. "They can only be business communications." This smugness is amply justified by the first volume of his *Collected Letters*⁴ whose unforthcoming nature is set out in the editors' admirably frank introduction:

Hardy's early letters are not very helpful . . . it is possible that Hardy himself never learnt to regard letter-writing as anything other than a chore, a necessary evil . . . references to his own work are distressingly infrequent. . . . For Hardy—and, of course, for his wife—the task of keeping up with the flow [of correspondence] was wearisome and unending. . . .

The semi-official transactions of an unenthusiastic correspondent take up the bulk of this impeccably edited collection. In point of intimacy it seldom rises much above that unerring bathos which Hardy could command at will, whether in letters to his first wife ("I have received your letter. Nothing has happened here . . . I am going to try Mr Herriot's plan of wool in the ears tonight . . .") for which he wore his Mr Pooter hat, or in poems like "The New Boots" for which he borrowed William McGonagall's. Both spirits might be said to hover genially over the *Talks at Max Gate* which took place when, after twenty years of waiting literally and metaphorically in Hardy's drive, the wistful Collins finally effected an entry on 9 April 1920. The apparently effortless flatness with which he captures the authentic note of constraint and courteous stonewalling makes these dialogues a kind of graphic rendering of Florence Hardy's remark, recorded round about this time, that she felt "rather covered in blue mould."

⁴ *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Vol. I: 1840–1892*. Edited by RICHARD LITTLE PURDY and MICHAEL MILLGATE. Oxford University Press, £12.50.

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY was Hardy's last, though not perhaps his most comprehensive, bid to stop posterity meddling where it had no business. It was not simply that in old age he developed, like Tess's father John Durbeyfield, a taste for inventing landed ancestors or transforming his own birthplace from a thatched and mudwalled cottage into "House and premises . . . with two gardens, horse-paddock, sand and gravel pits . . . and outbuildings." His scheme for redesigning the past included what seem to have been decidedly more fundamental alterations to the two marriages which had never previously given satisfaction. One of the revelations of Gittings' book is the painful ambivalence of feeling which prompted Hardy's flood of poems when his first wife died: the mutual indifference beneath which the marriage sank has been endlessly rehearsed but not the extreme, protracted physical suffering of Emma's death, a horror her husband could not acknowledge at the time or afterwards.

So much of *The Older Hardy* is devoted to correcting this kind of factual suppression or distortion that it is small wonder if the atmosphere sometimes comes, as Bayley points out, uncomfortably close to the court room:

Armed with such evidence, Gittings cannot resist acting as counsel for the prosecution . . . however sympathetic he is to the prisoner in the dock who, like all persons in that position, begins to take on a curiously faceless and anonymous character.

But to argue, as Bayley does, that there should be no question of tripping Hardy up and bringing him to book like this is to ignore the fact that the results of systematic evasiveness have proved the opposite of what Hardy had in mind. In the first place, gaps in the official *Life* were speedily filled in by speculation (the most persistent and sensational instance being the illegitimate child

whose existence was so ably demolished in Gittings' first volume). Worse still, the eventual discovery of Hardy's authorship bred the widespread habit of treating him like Belloc's Matilda who told such dreadful lies, it made one gasp and stretch one's eyes, till in the end nobody would believe a word she said.

This approach may be seen at its crudest in F. E. Halliday's biographical sketch ("Hardy maintained that of all his novels *Jude* had least to do with his own life; which means that it had most");⁵ at its most endearing and preposterous in the latest instalment of John Fowles' prolonged campaign to claim kinship with Hardy on the strength of their shared local background and common interest in the 1860s (to which claims Mr Fowles now adds—in an essay designed to cast more light on his own frame of mind than Hardy's—mutual marital guilt born of an obsessive creative urge with oedipal connections).⁶

But attempts to penetrate Hardy's protective carapace impose similar techniques on the soberest of scholars. Even the loyal and scrupulous Bayley inclines to take Hardy's remarks about his own writings with a pinch of salt; while Gittings has refined what one might call the Matilda principle to the point at which anything not specifically denied by Hardy acquires something like the force of direct confession. So does anything barely mentioned ("phrases of studied vagueness in Hardy's careful autobiography usually conceal some important personal knowledge"), such as the casual reference to Reading which produced perhaps the single most spectacular demonstration of Gittings' detective skills: a search of Reading records for facts about the unhappy early life of Hardy's paternal grandmother showed that she not only bore and abandoned a bastard child there, but that she was committed for theft to a House of Correction where she spent three months under threat of death by hanging. It would be a hard judge who did not concede that this discovery (not yet unearthed when Gittings wrote his first volume?) explains Hardy's cousins' claim that Tess's sufferings were "practically what happened to a relative."

⁵ "Thomas Hardy: The Man in his Work" in *Thomas Hardy after Fifty Years*. Edited by LANCE ST JOHN BUTLER. Macmillan, £7.95.

⁶ "Hardy and the Hag" in *Thomas Hardy after Fifty Years*. A brief extract may convey something of the flavour of this exuberant contribution:

"Though the wife is the mortal enemy of the mother as Ashtaroth-Aphrodite, she is also required to assume a rather more practical aspect of maternity—protective Jocasta against the cruel Laius of the review columns."

⁷ A hint of the forthcoming discovery is now incorporated in the new and revised paperback edition. *Young Thomas Hardy*. By ROBERT GITTINGS. Penguin, £1.25.

ADMITTEDLY THE SYSTEM of deduction by default can on occasion get out of hand—as, for instance, in the curious case of the unidentified London girl, H. A., to whom Hardy referred twice (or perhaps three times) in noncommittal terms and by initials only, on the strength of which Gittings in *Young Thomas Hardy* inferred a possible love affair, a rather more problematic connection with Hardy's loss of faith, and a purely hypothetical

influence on Sue Bridehead in *Jude*: all highly tentative suggestions which, by the end of *The Older Hardy* and with no fresh evidence adduced, have somehow mysteriously solidified into

H. A., the advanced girl of the innocent Hardy's first London days in the 1860s, *from whose encounters he returned shattered* to his native Dorset, with a store of emotional experience to last him literally a whole lifetime as a poet [my italics].

Lapses like this emphasise the difficulties and dangers of Gittings' method. Its best vindication is perhaps his splendid double portrait of Emma and Florence Hardy: one would be hard put to think of a more ingenious and macabre plot than Gittings' account of how Hardy managed symmetrically to betray each of his wives with the other. Emma's last years were made darker by the love poems Hardy, in his seventies, wrote to the young Florence Dugdale; but Emma was scarcely in her grave before the old cycle of jealousy and neglect restarted with Florence embittered and Hardy immersed in re-living his courtship of Emma. The story is riveting, both in its long-term tragic aspect and for its ironic detail—the moment when Emma noticed Hardy's resemblance to Crippen, for instance, casting herself as the murder victim and prevented only

by Florence's hasty departure from casting her as Ethel Le Neve; or the fact that both ladies successively confided their mounting dissatisfaction with Thomas to the same correspondent (a Hardy fan in the Lake District whose "positively libellous" letters from Florence were eventually burnt by Beatrix Potter).

RECONSTRUCTION OF THIS ORDER is the product of caution, patience, methodical thoroughness, a fine sense of balance and a rapport which owes as much to training and practice as to intuition. To complain, as Bayley does, that the result has "no more sense of privacy than a hospital nurse" is surely to misunderstand the nature of Gittings' attachment to Hardy which, as in all the best biographies, has developed into something not unlike the domestic familiarity of two old married people: a relationship at once deep and flexible, by turns admiring, proprietary, fond, exacting, even frankly captious on points like Hardy's "crushing hypochondria" or his susceptibility to "young women in fluffy blouses." If the Hardy who emerges from Gittings' book seems "curiously faceless", and the doings which inspired his poems "suddenly look rather dull", that is less a criticism than the inevitable consequence of admitting the reader to an intimacy possible only within a relationship as close as this one.

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 ANDRE DEUTSCH

It means that *The Older Hardy* produces at times much the same sensations as a visit to the site of Egdon Heath. But this sense of anticlimax, or something uncommonly like it, is the principal theme of Bayley's *Essay on Hardy* where effects generally glossed over or deplored take on new dignity and significance: "The quality of disappointment we taste in our experience of [Hardy's] text may seem to be a formalisation of disappointment as a bulky ingredient in life—certainly in life as he presents it." Slackness and ineffectuality make Hardy disappointing, a refusal (in which he anticipated Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Hemingway) to impose himself on his creations: what Bayley calls "a kind of lukewarmness in the text itself" to which "one can become addicted." The *Essay* demonstrates the strength of that addiction, and its sources in Hardy's fondness for whatever is banal, neutral or enervating, his indifference to method, the lack of concentration or intensity in "poems which make their point and fall flat" or novels which rely, like *The Dynasts*, on "the sturdy flatness of formula." *Tess* is treated with reservation, *Jude* as in some sense an abortion, while generous tribute is paid to former non-starters like *A Laodicean*, *The Hand of Ethelberta* or, oddest of all, the first half of *Two on a Tower*.

BAYLEY'S WHOLLY UNFORCED approach has a tonic freshness which is specially agreeable when set beside the increasingly desperate manoeuvres produced elsewhere by the urge to break new ground for the fiftieth anniversary of Hardy's death. One can't help noticing, for instance, how a novel like *The Well-Beloved* has suddenly been promoted from the back of the class, or the way in which virtually every commentator—from the essayists in *Thomas Hardy After Fifty Years* to Bayley himself—chooses as his text of the year the hitherto unfamiliar episode of Knight and the trilobite from *A Pair of Blue Eyes*. One may at least follow Bayley—if one can't agree with him—when he dismisses the haunting power of "Wessex Heights" as "in the bad sense ordinary" and chides Hardy for an obviousness more appropriate to Hilaire Belloc; though it is difficult not to hesitate when he recommends instead the patriotic doggerel of "A Call to National Service" of 1917:

*Up and be doing, all who have a hand
To lift, a back to bend. It must not be
In times like these that vaguely linger we
To air our vaunts and hopes. . . .*

And perhaps only addicts will feel quite at home when he praises "The New Boots" for its metrical

ingenuity and the “unfathomable quality” of its rustic dialogue:

*“They are his new boots”, she pursued;
“They have not been worn at all:
They stay there hung on the wall,
And are getting as stiff as wood.
He bought them for the wet weather,
And they are of waterproof leather.”*

It would be curious to see a selection of the poems made by one who so wholeheartedly embodies that character dear to Hardy’s heart, “him in whose ears the low-voiced Best is killed by the clash of the First.” But no one could do anything but rejoice to know that Hardy’s low voice—that

voice which, in Bayley’s phrase, “appears to tail away” or “to reproduce small talk mechanically like a shy man at a dinner table”—has found at last its own persuasive champion. Bayley’s reading is subtle, humorous, wide-ranging, absorbing even when most deliberately provoking, and above all perfectly free from any opinion not peculiar to himself. All in all, Hardy’s half-centenary could hardly have thrown up a more congenial, or more ideally complementary couple than, on the one hand, Gittings, whose clearcut and forthright portrait is a model of its kind, and, on the other, Bayley whose defence of the quintessential Hardyesque virtues of “reserve, taciturnity and hesitation” is as difficult to resist, often as quirky and elusive, as Hardy himself.

Turning Unhappiness Into Money

The Fiction Market Revisited—By DAVID LODGE

A COUPLE OF YEARS ago, reviewing in these pages Ronald Hayman’s British Council booklet *The Novel Today 1967–75*, I quoted his observation that “critics and historians of the novel generally pay too little attention to the consumer and to the conditions prevailing in the market”, and ventured a few remarks of my own on the economics of fiction publishing, with particular reference to the campaign for a Public Lending Right in this country (“Fiction and the Market”, *ENCOUNTER*, September 1976). The enactment of PLR seems more remote than ever today, but in the meantime two books¹ have appeared which attempt a serious and properly researched study of contemporary writing, especially prose fiction, in its socio-economic context—as something that is produced, bought and sold. Per Gedin is a Swedish publisher and John Sutherland is Reader in English at University College, London. They thus offer an interesting combination of perspectives on the subject—commercial and academic, British and European.

The writers share two assumptions. The first is that the character of prose fiction at any given time is to a considerable extent determined by the prevailing methods of production, distribution and consumption, and by the patterns of financial

reward for publishers, booksellers and authors. To some extent this must be true of any cultural product in the modern world, but the novel differs from poetry and drama and most other arts in that its emergence as a distinct literary form was more or less contemporaneous with the rise of industrial capitalism and the development of the first machine for mass-production, the printing press. Its fortunes have been inextricably involved with economics and technology ever since. Unlike a poem, a novel cannot conveniently be circulated in manuscript; unlike a play, it cannot be given the trial run of a cheap amateur production. To achieve even a minimal public existence, a novel needs to be printed and bound, and this has always been a relatively expensive business, with unpredictable returns on investment. Hence the emergence of the printer-bookseller (later to split into two distinct trades) as a supplier of the necessary risk capital.

As Per Gedin points out, novels have always had a special attraction for publishers, not only because they are culturally glamorous and prestigious, but because of their relatively quick return on investment, simplicity of production and capacity to guarantee an audience for subsequent works by the same author. Fiction has, therefore, been a staple of the publishing business for the last two centuries and, during most of that time, the largest single category of trade books. This brings me to the second assumption common to Gedin and Sutherland, namely, that there was a publishing “crisis” in

¹ *Literature in the Market Place*. By PER GEDIN. Faber £5.95. *Fiction and the Fiction Industry*. By J. A. SUTHERLAND, Athlone Press, £6.95.

the early 1970s which particularly affected the novel, the main symptoms of which were: a staggering rise in costs (between 30% and 40% per year), a general reduction in the number of titles published, a much more drastic reduction in the number of copies sold, the increasing Americanisation of European publishing practice, and widespread expressions of gloom and pessimism within the trade about the future of the literary novel. On this much, our two authors are agreed, but they differ considerably in their diagnoses of the underlying causes of the crisis and the gravity of its cultural implications. Paradoxically, Gedin, the publisher, is the more concerned with values, and more pessimistic about the future, while Sutherland, the academic, is more pragmatic, hard-nosed and cautiously optimistic about the capacity of literary art to survive in a harsher economic climate.

GEDIN'S ARGUMENT will be familiar to students of the "cultural debate" that extends from Coleridge and Carlyle to the Leavises, Hoggart, Williams and Steiner. Within this frame of reference he occupies a conservative or élitist position, unashamedly committed to "bourgeois" values. The rise of the novel, he correctly observes, coincided with the rise of the bourgeoisie, its triumph (in the literature of the 19th century) with the triumph of the bourgeoisie, and he greatly fears it will disappear with the bourgeoisie. For the graduated class structure of industrial society, in which the bourgeoisie exerted powerful influence as arbiters of taste and value, and conspicuously consumed the products of high culture even when these were critical of themselves, has been superseded by a mass or "service" society, a post-industrial society in which culture is homogenised and packaged for mass consumption, in which the better educated have much the same debased standards and tastes as the less educated, in which people have less and less time or inclination for reading, so occupied are they with travelling, watching TV or practising divers expensive, mechanised hobbies. Thus arises a literary situation in which the market for fiction is polarised between, on the one hand, a few "best sellers" designed simply as entertainment, promoted by ruthless advertising, saturation merchandising and pre-selection through book-clubs, and, on the other hand, fiction of serious literary pretension that loses money for its publishers and brings meagre rewards to its authors—or, in the more concise words of a contemporary American publisher, a situation where "fiction is either big or dead."

There is obviously more than a grain of truth in this analysis. But the fact that it has been expounded before suggests that it cannot entirely

account for the publishing crisis of the 1970s. Gedin quotes a German publisher, S. Fischer, writing in remarkably similar terms in 1926:

It is . . . symbolic that the book now is an object that can be most easily dispensed with in our daily life. We indulge in sports, dance, spend our evenings by the radio or at the cinema; after the day's work is done we are all too busy and have no time to read books. . . . The lost war and the American wave of culture have transformed our way of life, changed our tastes. . . . It would seem that the bourgeois class that remained after the cataclysm and which before the war comprised the cultural and economic leadership of the country, is in a state of disintegration.

Gedin calls these words "prophetic", but Fischer was evidently describing the situation as he saw it. And as Dr Sutherland observes, in a Postscript to his book that takes specific issue with Gedin's, "the same gloomily terminal views have been delivered authoritatively any time these last 100 years (by Ruskin, Henry James and Q. D. Leavis among others)." One could go back further still, to the diatribes of the Romantic poets against Gothic fiction and of Pope against Grub Street. The fact is that, ever since art entered the age of mechanical reproduction (to use Benjamin's phrase), which began with the printing press and has now reached the stage of electronics and micro-processors, humanist intellectuals have been filled with terror and nausea at the obscene ease with which texts, images and musical compositions can be replicated and multiplied without regard to their value, and have tended to construct myths of cultural decline out of their own dismay. Ironically, the printed book, which in earlier versions of the myth was seen as an agent of cultural decline, is now revered as a cultural totem.

TO CLASSIFY Gedin's argument in this way is not to suggest that his decent anxiety about the future of the literary novel is unfounded; and the publishing crisis of the early '70s was far from being a myth. Gedin has hard figures to show how the readership for serious fiction has declined, at the same time that the "break-even" point for sales has risen. In Sweden, a crucial factor would seem to have been the escalation of publishers' overheads which by 1974, in Gedin's own firm, had reached the staggering proportion of 160% of production costs. This was clearly the consequence of the rapid evolution of post-war Sweden into a high-wage egalitarian society. But Gedin sees the root of the problem as being cultural rather than economic. Dr Sutherland's emphasis is quite the reverse. He shows that the

British publishing crisis of the early '70s was part of a much more general economic panic which gripped the country as a result of the 1973 oil crisis, with consequent cuts in public spending. Here we come to a peculiar feature of the economics of fiction publishing in this country—its heavy dependence upon the public library system.

Without repeating facts and figures cited in my previous article, the situation may be baldly summarised as follows: in the post-War period, with the disappearance of commercial libraries and the growth of the paperback revolution, public libraries became the main purchasers of new, hardback fiction. In one perspective this could be seen as a state hand-out to novel readers at the expense of novelists, and thus led to the campaign for PLR. In another perspective it provided a reasonable prospect of break-even sales for novels of merit but minority appeal. What happened in the post-1973 "freeze" was that public libraries all over the country drastically curtailed and in some cases suspended their purchasing of new novels. Publishers thus found themselves deprived overnight of their most reliable customers. In 1977 Tom Rosenthal of Secker & Warburg estimated that "the safe library sale" of "a good literary first or second novel" had sunk from 1,500 to 300 or 400 copies. Publishers responded to the crisis by reducing the proportion of fiction titles they published, and by printing fewer copies. One gathers that the print run of a first novel nowadays is often as low as 1,200 copies: unless the paperback rights are sold, this will hardly break even for the publisher and will bring the author a derisory sum in royalties. Even highly successful novelists are selling, apparently, fewer copies than formerly. In 1973, before the crisis was fully felt, the late Tony Godwin of Weidenfeld & Nicolson was complaining that his best-selling novelists, such as Margaret Drabble, Edna O'Brien and Eric Ambler, were selling only 15,000 copies, whereas 15 years earlier writers of comparable status would have sold twice that quantity. Meanwhile the *real* bestsellers—the Alistair Macleans, the Frederick Forsyths, the Peter Benchleys—had never had it so good.

In the last sentence of *Literature in the Market Place*, Per Gedin asserts: "An immediate and sizeable contribution by society is needed in order to preserve and continue to develop the literary book—as much for the sake of society itself as for the book." Dr Sutherland, however, is not wholly convinced that the novel is "intrinsically humane and culturally necessary", and is sceptical about the various ways in which society has tried or might try to guarantee the survival of the literary novel. His verdict on PLR is that it

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has been "a tragedy of procrastination." "What could have been done in 1966 painlessly could not be done in 1976 [in 1976 the PLR bill was filibustered by a trio of populist backbenchers named, unbelievably, Moate, Sproat and English] and what was done after 1976 would necessarily be too little and too late." PLR is still worth pursuing as a matter of principle, but, apart from the fact that libraries are buying much less fiction anyway, it seems unlikely that any Government will ever provide enough money to make an individual writer's income from this source significant. The financial commitment of the Government to the 1976 bill was only £1 million, of which £400,000 would have been spent on administration, and there are an estimated 113,000 authors eligible. It is the last figure that is perhaps the most daunting. In their heroic campaign for PLR, the Writers' Action Group has often cited the success of organised action by authors in Denmark and Sweden (oddly, Per Gedin makes no mention of this in his book) in establishing and improving the terms of their PLR, but the literary communities of those countries are tiny by comparison with ours. And there is an obvious incentive for the government of any non-Anglophone nation to invest in its own literary language in the face of the steady development of English as an international language.

THE MAIN SOURCE OF public subsidy for the literary novel in Britain is the Arts Council, which gives bursaries and endows fellowships, subsidises literary magazines, and underwrites the New Fiction Society, a kind of non-profit-making book club offering quality fiction by new and established authors at a 20%-30% discount. Sutherland's account of this latter enterprise makes particularly melancholy reading. In spite of an extensive advertising campaign, the NFS never added more than 600 copies to the sale of any one novel. Between October 1974 and January 1977 it sold only 13,000 books at a cost of £60,500 to the Arts Council (i.e. £4.65 per volume of public money). As Sutherland remarks, "it would have been cheaper to buy the novels at full price from a bookshop and give them away to passers-by in Piccadilly." As for the other Arts Council subventions of literature, Sutherland makes the obvious points that its budget is pitifully inadequate and that there is no way of giving hand-outs to individual authors that will be seen to be fair by all concerned, including unlucky applicants.

Another option he considers is a system of academic patronage of writers on the American model, through the development of Creative

Writing courses in universities. This he thinks is unlikely to happen, because of an ingrained British prejudice (which he seems to share) against such courses, and because there is at present no money to spare for new initiatives in British higher education. My own view is somewhat different: there is a real demand on the part of students for such courses, and since higher education is a buyers' market these days, they are likely to become increasingly common. However, in the form in which they are educationally defensible they are not necessarily best taught by professional writers, and to do a lot of such teaching can certainly have a deleterious effect on the writer's own creativity.

Other ways of keeping the serious novel afloat considered by Sutherland include: self-publishing, publishing collectives, literary prizes, writing consciously for an international market (e.g. Anthony Burgess, Muriel Spark), writing for television (e.g. Frederick Raphael's *The Glittering Prizes*, a series of plays later published as a novel). None of these seems to offer a general panacea. Indeed, the only success story in the book world of recent years seems to have been Melvyn Bragg's TV programme *Read All About It* (now conducted by Ronald Harwood), which, whatever reservations one may have about its showbiz style, has demonstrated that there is a large reading public interested in information and comment about new books. But they are, of course, paperback books—and that is where the paying audience for fiction, for any kind of fiction, really is these days. The NFS failed, I would guess, because the discount it offered was not enough to compete with paperback prices. Many of the fifteen thousand "missing" readers who should, according to Tony Godwin, have been buying Margaret Drabble's or Edna O'Brien's latest novels, were presumably waiting for the paperback to appear. There are few novels, after all, that one "cannot wait" to read, and the paperback bookshelves are distractingly full of novels that one always meant to read. There is no scarcity of good fiction (unlike certain East European countries, where any novel whatsoever sells out as a matter of course). But the cheapness of paperbacks entails long print runs, short shelf-life, and a highly selective list of titles. This is why the fiction industry does not "go paperback", as it is often urged to do by laymen: to do so would entail killing the seedcorn—the promising young writer who gets his chance with a first printing of 1,200–1,600 copies. But the end result is a strangely artificial literary marketplace, in which all the action and excitement (the reviews, the promotional publicity, the prizes, etc.) seem to be going on at the hardback end, but most of the actual buying and selling is going on

at the other, paperback, end. The future of the novel as we know it probably depends in large part upon the success of the publishing industry and the book trade in bringing these two spheres of activity into a more logical and mutually advantageous relationship with each other.

THE PORTENTS are not particularly encouraging. Sutherland's analysis suggests that the British book market will inevitably follow the pattern set by America, where, according to Richard Kostelanetz, "as far as commercial publishing is concerned, the *end* has come and gone; that world has passed beyond hell." It is a world in which books can be made into multi-million-dollar best-sellers before they have even been published, in which paperbacks have a shelf-life of two weeks and fifty per cent of them are returned and pulped as a matter of course, in which the sale of 3,500 copies of a hardback novel means an inevitable loss for the publisher of \$7,000–\$10,000 "on condition one hasn't paid out too much for advertising."

It is not clear whether Dr Sutherland thinks this prospect is a disaster which must be avoided at all costs, or a disagreeable fact of modern economic life to which the genteel and (until recently) protected world of British publishing will have to adjust sooner or later. As I have

already implied, the main disappointment of his lively and informative book is its curious evasiveness about literary values. He has, for example, a fascinating chapter on the publication history of Edward Doctorow's *Ragtime*—the initial promotional "hype", the orchestrated rapturous reception in America, the sensational early sales and subsidiary rights figures, the defensive hostility of the British reviews, the second thoughts in America, and so on—but the crucial core of this analysis, the question whether *Ragtime* was really any good or not, is curiously absent. Although he assumes that his readers will be concerned about the survival of the literary novel, it is by no means certain that he himself is, or that he would lose much sleep if the world never heard another word from the likes of Margaret Drabble and Edna O'Brien, Anthony Burgess and Muriel Spark—or the "campus novelists" to whom he devotes half a chapter, and amongst whom I was amused to discover myself portrayed in "a kind of guarded, retreated pose."

IN CONCLUSION, I shall drop my guard and lead with my chin. I have already indicated the dependence of the novel as a material object on industrial methods of manufacture; and it has always seemed to me that as a mode of *literary* production novel-writing conforms closely to the

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model of primitive capitalism. "Writing", the novelist J. P. Donleavy once remarked, "is a way of turning the unhappiest moments of one's life into money." The joke conceals a profound truth.

The novelist risks his "capital"—his experience, his imagination, his verbal skill, his time (a lot of that), his nervous energy, his psychological privacy and his self-esteem in the construction of an artefact, a fictional text which he takes to the marketplace, hoping someone will pay him for the right to produce and sell it, and that others will, at a second remove, pay him for the privilege of reading it. Nobody has asked him to write it. No one is born into or brought up to novel-writing as a trade or calling. Writing a novel is a gratuitous act, like Robinson Crusoe running away from his comfortable home to make his fortune. It is an intensely individualistic and competitive activity, which is why attempts at cooperative publishing ventures nearly always

² I.e. a "loan-based" scheme, by which a writer's remuneration would be related to the number of times his book is borrowed from libraries, calculated by sampling. It was the Writers' Action Group's insistence on this principle that largely contributed to the "procrastination" on PLR lamented by Dr Sutherland.

fail. The New York Fiction Collective, Dr Sutherland touchingly records, held "consciousness-raising sessions designed to eliminate the counterproductive addiction to 'success'." Vain endeavour! Novelists are driven by the dream of personal success (why else would they persist in such a difficult, laborious, psychologically taxing activity?) and their relationships with their peers usually include strong feelings of rivalry. They compare jealously advances, sales, terms of contract. They deeply resent—even socialist novelists deeply resent—paying income tax on their writing earnings, and often get into serious difficulties on this account. I do not mean to imply that novelists are a peculiarly mercenary group of writers. It is simply that they recognise (in a way which I suspect is not true of poets) that their fortune in the market—the readiness of strangers to risk or expend money on their creative work—is a significant criterion of achievement. Not the only one of course—we also want to be loved, respected, praised by the discerning (we are insatiable)—but an essential one, because an objective one. Indeed I believe most novelists, even "literary" ones, would, forced to choose, prefer to be judged by the market (assuming it is free from censorship) than by any other institution. One reason, after all, why novelists are so ill-rewarded, on the whole, for their labours, is that there are too many of us, too many manuscripts for publishers to choose from, too many titles for bookshops and literary editors to cope with, too many novels for customers to buy. The situation could be drastically altered in favour of novelists by controlling their numbers by means of a union and a closed shop (as is the practice in most communist countries). But who would willingly yield up his absolute right to publish the products of his imagination? Who would confidently undertake to discriminate between competing applicants for that right? All attempts to tinker with the free play of the market by grants, subsidies, bursaries, etc., are open to similar objections, in a milder form. It is highly significant that the only form of state subsidy that has won the broad support of novelists themselves in this country is a form of PLR scrupulously related to the individual writer's success in the library "market";² unfortunately a scheme that is so fair cannot, it seems, benefit anybody very significantly.

The literary market, then, has functioned historically not merely as a means of material production and distribution of prose fiction, but as a kind of sounding board for the novelist's own sense of his literary identity and achievement. But the literary market can fulfil that function only as long as it is accessible to all works of merit. It may produce a great deal of rubbish, but it must not

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exclude the good. There must be a general faith that, sooner or later, any novel of real value will find a publisher. I personally believe that this is still true of the British publishing world. But it

may not be true of America, and, if present trends continue, it may one day no longer be the case here. *That* will be the real crisis for publishing and for the novel.

Ghostly Voices

Eliot's "Four Quartets"—By BERNARD BERGONZI

IN ESSENTIALS, T. S. Eliot's *oeuvre* is binary: *Waste Land*: *Quartets*. Some readers are strongly attracted to one pole, some to the other. It is possible, though not easy or usual, to feel a perfect and equal regard for both poems; it is probably more common to veer, according to mood or circumstance, between the two. A few years ago Mrs Valerie Eliot's edition of the *Waste Land* manuscripts¹ made that poem an object of new critical interest. It began to look more confessional, less historical and "impersonal" than earlier readers had supposed. Indeed, by now the tendency to read *The Waste Land* in deeply personal, even autobiographical terms has gone far enough. Dame Helen Gardner's book on *Four Quartets*² may do something similar in directing fresh readings of the later masterpiece. It is a dexterous and enlightening work of scholarship; the book production, in the presentation of texts, drafts, commentary and critical apparatus, is both elegant and functional.

Although we habitually speak of *Four Quartets* as a unified sequence, even a single poem, it was never planned as one. *Burnt Norton* grew out of some lines discarded from *Murder in the Cathedral* in the course of production, and for several years stood alone as the last poem in Eliot's *Collected Poems 1909–1935*. The outbreak of war in 1939 turned Eliot's thoughts away from drama and back to lyrical and meditative poetry; the result was *East Coker* in 1940, consciously modelled on *Burnt Norton*. For a time Eliot was thinking in terms of a trilogy; *The Dry Salvages* followed in 1941 and it was not until *Little Gidding* came out, after some delay, in 1942 that the familiar quadripartite structure was established. In tracing the stages of composition Dame Helen has been through many manuscripts, typed drafts and

early printed versions, most of them now at Cambridge, in the John Hayward collection at King's or in the papers that Eliot himself presented to Magdalene. There is not a lot of material pertaining to *Burnt Norton*, but for the other three *Quartets* the deposits are rich and complex: several manuscript or typescript drafts for each poem; the first printed versions in the *New English Weekly*; the first separate publication as Faber pamphlets; and the collected sequence brought out by Faber as *Four Quartets* in 1944. Dame Helen uses this 1944 edition for her texts, while also collating them with the *Collected Poems* of 1963, and the reset paperback edition of that published in 1974.

STUDENTS OF BIBLIOGRAPHY and editorial method will find much meat here; but the general reader may need Dame Helen's assurance in her preface that "the study of the creative process, however interesting, has far less to give us than a study of the object created"; she adds, though, that in this case her four years of labour on the *Quartets* has only increased her understanding and enjoyment of them. Her book is not an edition of the *Quartets*, but it provides much material essential to a future editor. She pinpoints those places where there is evidently something wrong with the existing texts, and this aspect of her book will be immediately useful to readers of Eliot. For instance, there are the well-known lines in *East Coker*:

*In my beginning is my end. Now the light falls
Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
Shuttered with branches. . . .*

All the drafts and the proof of the *New English Weekly* text read "open fields." Dame Helen suggests that the final "s" may have been accidentally dropped in the magazine publication and that the error was never noticed and corrected. The published reading seems to me impoverished compared with the poetically suggestive sense of

¹ See my ENCOUNTER review, "Maps of the Waste Land" (April 1972).

² *The Composition of Four Quartets*. By HELEN GARDNER. Faber, £9.50.

light falling over a whole countryside conveyed by the plural "fields."

Later in *East Coker* we have:

*Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry....*

All the drafts and printed texts before the 1944 *Four Quartets* have a comma after lightning. As Dame Helen says in her commentary this is clearly the right reading and should eventually be restored.

There is a further instance in *Little Gidding*. The opening paragraph ends with the lines:

*Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Zero summer?*

Four out of five drafts and the first printed text in the *New English Weekly* read:

*Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Summer beyond sense, the inapprehensible
Zero summer?*

Again, this is evidently preferable to the established text, a delicately modulated conclusion where "inapprehensible" leads on deftly to the otherwise abrupt "Zero." The middle line disappeared from the supposedly final draft from which the pamphlet was set up. Dame Helen thinks it possible that the omission was accidental; in fact, John Hayward pencilled the line in on the draft as if he suspected just that. Here again a future editor will have to consider whether or not to restore the reading.

There is plenty of evidence in this book of how easily errors could creep into the text, particularly in the successive printed versions. There is one crass instance in *East Coker*, where "Here or there does not matter" became the meaningless "Here and there does not matter" in the 1944 edition; Eliot acknowledged the error when it was pointed out to him, but it was not finally corrected until the 1974 paperback edition of the *Collected Poems*.

In a less problematical area Dame Helen puts Eliot right about the supposed etymology of "The Dry Salvages." Like many other readers I have always believed, following his note, that it meant "presumably *les trois sauvages*." On the authority of no less than the distinguished naval historian, Rear-Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, U.S.N. (Ret.)—a great admirer, incidentally, of the passages about the sea in *The Dry Salvages*—we learn that Eliot was wrong. "Dry" means simply "dry", because the rocks in question were above the sea at high water, in contrast to the nearby "Little Salvages" which were covered twice daily. "Salvages" does have something to do with "sauvages" or "savages", though the connection remains obscure.

These are matters on which Eliot's readers will want to pencil in a few queries and corrections on their text of *Four Quartets*.

TURNING TO THE SUBSTANCE of the drafts and the process of composition, one makes interesting if inconclusive discoveries. *Little Gidding* gave Eliot most trouble and is full of false starts and abandoned possibilities. He wrote to John Hayward while he was working on it in 1941:

My suspicions about the poem are partly due to the fact that as it was written to complete a series, and not solely for itself, it may be too much from the head and may show signs of flagging. That is a dilemma.

The dilemma was most acute with *Little Gidding*, though it had been present from *East Coker* onwards, after Eliot resolved to write a related sequence of poems, with the same structure. Most of the difficulties in *Little Gidding* were overcome, partly by Eliot's own tact and self-critical insights, partly by the good advice of John Hayward who read and commented on the drafts. Hayward was no Pound; his comments were sometimes over-literal and pedantic, but he was generally very useful to Eliot in getting the poem into shape.

Eliot himself decided not to end Part III of *Little Gidding* with a version of the traditional prayer, *Anima Christi sanctifica me*:

*Soul of Christ, sanctify them,
Body of Christ, let their bodies be good earth,
Water from the side of Christ wash them,
Fire from the heart of Christ, incinerate them.*

The excision was well judged, since the *Quartets* are effective as religious poetry without being too explicitly or exclusively Christian. Earlier in this section Eliot's thoughts move out from the chapel at Little Gidding to the illustrious dead of the 17th century, in the lines beginning "If I think of a king at nightfall"; the line referring to Milton, "And of one who died blind and quiet", was, it appears, inserted in the manuscript as an afterthought. Yet it is a very significant insertion, indicating Eliot's personal reconciliation with the poet whom he had long regarded with antipathy, perhaps reflecting the wartime feeling that all factions should be brought together, "folded in a single party."

Dame Helen's account of *Little Gidding* is particularly interesting on the Dantean "air-raid" section which Eliot said "cost me far more time and trouble and vexation than any passage of the same length that I have ever written." The drafts reproduced here show vividly the kind of trouble he ran into, for as Dame Helen puts it,

"He was here attempting to sustain a style consistently over a long span, whereas his natural genius was towards the paragraph." That part of the poem originally finished with a rather weak catalogue of images or "essential moments", concluding with a deliberate harking-back to "La Figlia che Piange":

*He turned away, and in the autumn weather
I heard a distant dull deferred report
At which I started: and the sun had risen.*

Then, happily, fresh inspiration came and Eliot substituted the magnificent lines that begin: "But, as the passage now presents no hindrance/To the spirit unappeased and peregrine. . . ." One of the most powerful phrases here, "the laceration/Of laughter at what ceases to amuse", is thanks to a suggestion by John Hayward which Eliot gratefully adopted.

SUCH INSIGHTS INTO Eliot's creative activity are illuminating, though they are not numerous in Dame Helen's book. It does not transform one's idea of the *Quartets*, but the process of comparing the 1944 text—printed at the top of the page—with the drafts, and following the editorial commentary, does provide a uniquely valuable experience of reading the sequence carefully and

slowly and patiently. Dame Helen's introductory chapters—on the documents in the case, and on the growth and sources of *Four Quartets*—succinctly marshal a lot of relevant information. But they seem to me deficient, by omission, in one major respect.

Nearly 30 years ago, in *The Art of T. S. Eliot*, she remarked that the structure of each quartet "is essentially the same as the structure of *The Waste Land*." It is indeed; *Burnt Norton* in particular is noticeably close to *The Waste Land*. The rose-garden parallels the hyacinth-garden, and the phrase "heart of light" occurs in the first section of each, while there are London settings and place-names in the third sections. It seems that when Eliot was developing *Burnt Norton* from the lines removed from *Murder in the Cathedral* he must have been consciously using *The Waste Land* as his model, though unfortunately the manuscript remains are too sparse to offer any supporting evidence. The model was reproduced three more times when the other quartets were written between 1940 and 1942, and to this extent *The Waste Land* affects the whole sequence, however different the poetry. I find it strange that Dame Helen, having made the point so long ago, ignores it in her new study, where one might have expected it to be developed.

There is another and much smaller question

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where she passes over a link between the *Quartets* and Eliot's earlier poetry. As she reminds us, and as Eliot reminded John Hayward, "the children in the apple-tree" at the end of *Little Gidding* echo "the hidden laughter/Of children in the foliage" in *Burnt Norton*, and both recall "Children's voices in the orchard", the first line of "New Hampshire." But that line was itself adapted from "Children singing in the orchard", from the suppressed "Ode", published for the first and last time in *Ara Vos Prec* in 1920. Eliot was a careful salvager of his own discarded fragments and this particular *topos* clearly meant much to him over many years.

SO, IN THE END, when the process of composition has been carefully inspected and the panels are screwed back into place and the text stands more or less as we always knew it, with smooth and continuous surfaces, what remains? *Four Quartets*, a difficult poem. More difficult, certainly, than Eliot thought, since he genuinely believed that it was simpler and easier to understand than *The Waste Land*. In a superficial way it is, since there are fewer allusions and phrases in foreign languages, and no disconcerting shifts in space and time. But *The Waste Land* is a dramatic poem: the voices may weave in and out in an

elusive way, but they have names and recognisable intonations and even, sometimes, personal identities. *Four Quartets* has many voices—reflective, lyrical, lecturing, praying, preaching—but we cannot easily identify and separate them. Nor can we be sure how to hear them.

Like many other critics I have condemned the flatter and duller expository passages of the *Quartets*; Dame Helen herself is unhappy about such things as the "regrettably defensive" lines in *East Coker*, "You say I am repeating/Something I have said before. I shall say it again", or what she describes as the "lame close" of *The Dry Salvages*. Some critics have claimed that in the *Quartets* Eliot abandoned the fragmentary but intense art of *The Waste Land*, which was dramatic, imagistic, and intuitive, in favour of merely relaxed or empty discourse. C. K. Stead has argued this case, urbanely in *The New Poetic*, and much more sharply in a lecture I heard him deliver last year. For years I have been half-convinced by it; now I tend to doubt it. Critically it may not be acceptable to quote a few lines and simply dismiss them as "flat" or "thin." They may indeed seem so in isolation, but the contexts can redeem them, or "recuperate" them in structuralist terminology. This isn't always so—some flatness is irredeemable—but increasingly I hear the *Quartets* as an interplay of ghostly

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voices, some rich, some thin, but interacting polyphonically.

It is not an easy music to pick up or listen to—I find *The Waste Land* far solider and more approachable—but it grows upon one. And in the end the music seems to draw the poem out of the contexts that are evident in *The Composition of Four Quartets*: Possum in middle age; John Hayward's pedantic learning; Faber and Faber; the Anglican Church; England in wartime; memories of the sea and an American childhood. Eventually the voices *are* the poem, as it floats in space, a pure linguistic entity. This is not just my own personal response; something similar has

been argued by recent critics who are happy to recuperate the *Quartets* in neo-symbolist terms as a great self-referring exploration of their own language; I am thinking of Peter Ackroyd in *Notes for a New Culture* and Michael Edwards in *Eliot/Language*. Such a reading can account for everything, the flattest discourse as well as the most intense lyricism. All is language, all belongs. My own view is more cautious than this, since I still incline to believe that the *Quartets* do not finally and completely hang together; not everything fits. I find too many resistances to complete recuperation; the poem remains hard, not properly *lisible*, modern.

Duty & Desire

Re-reading Some Victorians—By ROSEMARY JACKSON

ENTERING THE WORLD of Victorian fiction sometimes feels rather like walking into the family home at Clapham which Thackeray describes in *The Newcomes*:

It was a serious paradise. As you entered at the gate, gravity fell on you; and decorum wrapped you in a garment of starch.

The familiar interior is lined with patiently worked samplers advocating sobriety, thrift, rectitude, self-control; ranged along the shelves are china tokens of respectability; hidden behind the aspidistras are the customary bell jars and their various corpses. Hazlitt insisted as early as 1832 that "Gravity is one great ingredient in the conduct of life" and there are no "major" Victorians who escape this deadly earnestness. For all of them, *earnestness* is the keyword, the centre of gravity from Keble to Carlyle, from Trimmer to Trollope. "Be earnest, earnest, earnest; mad if thou wilt"; writes Kingsley in 1848, "Do what thou dost as if the stake were heaven." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might", urges Carlyle. "I have always been thoroughly in earnest . . . there is no substitute for thorough-going, ardent, and sincere earnestness", proclaims the hero of *David Copperfield*.

Geoffrey Tillotson's knowledgeable and lucid study¹ of the "first generation" of Victorian writers—Carlyle, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontës, Mrs Gaskell, Trollope, Tennyson, Browning—alerts us to earnestness as their ruling principle. It is linked up to a chain of equally fettering keywords—discipline, conduct ("three-quarters of life" according to Arnold), obedience, "purity of manners" (Trollope), self-restraint, "the habits of punctuality, order, diligence" (Dickens); but it is earnestness which solders them together. Like Thackeray, for whom life was a kind of moral probation, all the Victorian sages come up to existence as they would to a trial in which remission depends upon good conduct. And the verdict they impose upon themselves is one of diligent performance of one's duty. For if earnestness was seriousness in action—part of Dr Thomas Arnold's weighty heritage—then duty was its daily practice, as Dickens reminds us in 1850:

Be earnest—earnest in life's reality and do not let your life, which has a purpose in it—every life upon the earth has—fly by while you are brooding over mysteries. The mystery is not here, but far beyond the sky. The preparation for it, is doing duty.

Duty became, in fact, a new kind of divinity. George Eliot's triad of the highest possible values comprised God ("inconceivable"), Immortality

¹ *A View of Victorian Literature*. By GEOFFREY TILLOTSON. Oxford University Press, £6.95.

("unbelievable"), Duty ("peremptory and absolute"), the greatest of these being duty. It was no mere abstraction. It showed the importance of being—and doing—in earnest on a local level, in a day-to-day routine, becoming "the sense that handles daily life—That keeps us all in order more or less" (Tennyson, *Walking to the Mail*).

That "keeping in order" was the crucial function of duty for the mid-Victorians. More and more, it became a necessary stay against confusion, holding in the chaos on intellectual, religious and political fronts. "Therefore fret not nor be of doubtful mind", preaches Kingsley, "but just do the duty which lies nearest." It was the panacea to all social ills, the universal remedy for frustration and discontent. Being free, it was available to all. Its moral values cut across class boundaries and sexual differences to give dignity and noble stature to those who practised it. Like death, duty worked as the great Victorian leveller. Its skeletal frame was pulled by the strings of an old maxim, *laborare est orare*, and it went through its macabre paces to the notes of Carlyle's chorus: "Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action", "Know thy work and do it", "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee, which thou knowest to be a Duty," and so on. Professor Tillotson emphasises that it is Carlyle who is the dominant figure in the 1830s and 1840s, and it is his voice which echoes in England through the following decades. It is Carlyle who engraves on the stone an eleventh commandment, "Idleness shall not be", Carlyle who confirms the new beatitude, "Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it", Carlyle whose voice sounds stridently on the side of duty as the great liberator in whose service is perfect freedom. Professor Tillotson's sympathetically humane volume (though patronising about Mrs Gaskell) does not, I think, consider the consequences of this ethic in any adequate manner.

THE HEAVY EMPHASIS on work and duty was neither innocent nor accidental. It was, of course, part of the Puritan packet which had preached self-denial from St Augustine onwards and, like Pandora's box, had been re-opened by the Evangelicals to add to the sting of early Victorian dogmas of abnegation. But it also coincided with the industrial priorities of the mid-century. Samuel Smiles wrote in his best-selling manual *Self-Help* (1859)—to be followed by *Character, Thrift, Duty, Conduct*—that

as steady application to work is the healthiest training for every individual, so it is the best discipline of a state. Honourable industry travels the same road with duty; and Providence

has closely linked both with happiness. The gods . . . have placed labour and toil on the way leading to the Elysian fields.

Religious and political pressures coincided to make the primary Victorian duty one of self-repression. The secrets of success, claimed Smiles, were patience, diligence, devoted industry. It was a strait, thorny, painfully retarded path: *Great Expectations* has Dickens pointing back to square one for those who think it's done by magic. In buttressing the dominant ideology, Smiles hammered the nails in the coffin of self-fulfilment. Self could be realised only in doing what was prescribed and permitted, and any discordant voices protesting against such an ethic had to be silenced—especially by oneself. In Tennyson's suicidal gesturing, this becomes "Self less than Duty, even to the grave."

Whatever one feels about the function of duty within the Victorian ideology, there is no denying that it was experienced as a punitive ethic. The contempt for "doing as one likes" (Carlyle's phrase before Matthew Arnold appropriated it in *Culture and Anarchy*) condemned pleasure as indulgence and freedom as chaos. Even Clough nobly shouldered his cross under the guidance of Arnold senior: "It is a great battle to deny ourselves, to abdicate the throne of Self, to surrender up the principle of self pleasing. Yet this must be done. . . ." Ruskin tightened the screws in *The Two Paths*: "It is his Restraint which is honourable to man, not his liberty." Only ten years later, Ruskin retracted—tentatively. The cost was found to be too high. In its eagerness to embrace unhappiness and repress its discontents, the age was turning self-denial into masochism and suicide. By the time of *The Ethics of the Dust* (1868) Ruskin's tone is one of grief:

The self-sacrifice of a human being is not a lovely thing. It is often a necessary and noble thing; but no form nor degree of suicide can ever be lovely . . . the real sacrifice of all our strength, or life, or happiness to others . . . is a *mournful necessity*.

Ruskin's double-edged phrase here is characteristic of the ambiguity which divides Victorian fiction. It is torn between a sorrowful critique of a repressive culture and a determined assertion of its necessity, whatever the pains it inflicts. The texts themselves are riddled with contradictions as they try to reconcile these two sides of Ruskin's paradox.

AMONG THE POETS, it is Tennyson who tears himself to pieces most pitilessly in this kind of snare. Caught in the Victorian equivalent of *Catch 22*, he is made to collude in an ethic which he knows to be repressive. A new biography of

Tennyson² by Philip Henderson re-works old ground of his public and private lives, adding anecdotes and welcome details of the genesis of certain poems. It's smooth and pleasant reading, though flowery at the side of Christopher Ricks' definitive *Tennyson* (1972). Professor Ricks focused on the essential dualism of Tennyson, reading the spaces and silences around the poems as eloquent signs of a divided psyche. It is this structural probing which W. David Shaw develops in *Tennyson's Style*,³ a sophisticated examination of the poems through "the microcosm of language" as it witnesses ambiguity in action. Professor Shaw detects in this "poetry of conditional assertion . . . of hypothetical forms" a number of narrative masks, disguises, pretences, assumed by Tennyson in his quest for security. "Tennyson . . . the poet of dissolving roles longs all his life for stable forms . . . he redirects anxieties . . . in a desperate effort to create certainty where only uncertainty exists." There are few direct statements or positive moments in Tennyson. Behind the public assertions lie endless qualifications, "language doubling back into

repression", "contrived resolutions", disbelief in his own fictions: "the narrative masks hide repressed desires." The breakdown of syntax, its hesitation, or its spiralling into a point of paralysis, is symptomatic of Tennyson's deadlock. Many of his poems find themselves unable to proceed—they end in a stillness which is a form of stasis rather than a delicate balance.

The contradictions are blatant in any number of Tennyson's poems. A fairly straightforward example is "Love and Duty" where the first is sacrificed for the second, but the protest and the submission are equally ambivalent:

*For Love himself took part against himself
To warn us off, and Duty loved of Love—
O this world's curse,—beloved but hated—came
Like Death betwixt thy dear embrace and mine. . .*

The syntactical ambiguities (does "curse" refer to love, or duty?) are typical of Tennyson's desire to believe in the necessary deprivation of desire, "the endless capacity of his mind to deceive itself" (Shaw). Even the most public of his poems, his "Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington", is equivocal. It protests too much. Three times it insists "The path of duty was the way to glory", that only one whose "life was work" could have protected England from revolution in the 1840s, that self-denial sends the

² *Tennyson: Poet and Prophet*. By PHILIP HENDERSON. Routledge & Kegan Paul, £6.95.

³ *Tennyson's Style*. By W. DAVID SHAW. Cornell University Press, \$12.50, £10.

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Duke to heaven, where "the toppling crags of Duty scaled/Are close upon the shining table-lands/To which our God himself is moon and sun." The heavens are mapped out rather too conveniently here—one suspects that Tennyson himself did not believe in such a topography. Not that he found it easy to accept any form of heaven: all his images of Paradise are painful, fatal, or artificial. Whether it's the Lady of Shalott, dying for trying to translate desire into actuality, or the Lotus Eaters, Ulysses, St Simeon Stylites, Tristram ("clove through the brain" when his lips touch Iseult), or Enoch Arden (who "oft denied his heart his dearest wish"), Tennyson's personae encounter death as the price of vision, love, or pleasure. He is unable to regard hedonism as other than enervating, yet has a dreamy desire for oblivion, "sighing for Lebanon." Shaw writes that "the intellect cannot accept the (irrational) myths which it desires, so ends its meditations in irony." But the irony highlights the illusory nature of those protective fictions with which Tennyson attempts to conclude. *In Memoriam* and *Idylls of the King* are full of conditionals: "if indeed . . .", "but", "would", "should", "might", "So let me think", "I faintly trust", "So runs my dream", "For all my mind is clouded with a doubt. . . ." Shaw's fine sensitivity to these kinds of linguistic ambiguity leaves only one reservation to be made about his otherwise excellent examination of Tennyson's syntax and style: it rests content with identification. It makes no attempt to explore the meanings of such contradictions.

THEY WERE CERTAINLY not peculiar to Tennyson. As early as 1805, in his "Ode to Duty", Wordsworth had made a conventional obeisance to that lady, "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!/O Duty! if that name thou love,/Who art a light to guide, a rod/To check the erring and reprove", only to have apology follow in the wake of apostrophe. What drags him to duty is fatigue: "Me this uncharter'd freedom tires." He colludes with it only by a typical sleight-of-hand which lets him interpret "self-sacrifice" as freedom while knowing otherwise:

*Yet not the less would I throughout
Still act according to the voice
Of my own wish; and feel past doubt
That my submissiveness was choice. . . .*

Attempts to acquiesce in this supreme fiction are the driving forces behind a mass of Victorian

texts. Needing to believe in their freedom of choice, they manage various strategies and structural ingenuities to convince themselves of the virtue of a vicious and repressive ideology—and such self-repression was a far more effective means of cultural continuity—as Wordsworth concluded: "In truth the prison unto which we doom/Ourselves no prison is. . . ."

One of the least equivocal protest poems—though ending in a familiar truce—is Elizabeth Barrett Browning's brilliantly acerbic *Aurora Leigh*, first published in 1857. Now in a new edition⁴ (significantly the only one this century) with a superb introduction by Cora Kaplan, who calls it "a dense and complex text . . . an unmannerly intervention in the 'high' patriarchal discourse of bourgeois culture . . . a major confrontation of patriarchal attitudes [which are] the problem of human culture", it is a long novel/poem (2,000 lines more than *Paradise Lost*!) which punctuates the Victorian calm with an acrid statement of disapproval and dissent. The plot (fortunately, not the point) is a piece of hack romance: Aurora Leigh, orphaned in Italy, is transplanted to a grey England, lives with maiden aunt, loves rich cousin Romney, becomes famous poet, witnesses Romney's disastrous love affairs with poor Marian Erle and rich Lady Waldemar and his failed socialist ventures, until both their lives have crumbled into dust sufficiently for them to marry. Romney has to undergo a symbolic castration to be reduced to Aurora's level—like Rochester in *Jane Eyre* he is "feminised" through fire and blinding—and the final call is to the familiar Victorian anodyne: duty. They cease "snarling on/For ever that the world's not paradise" and resolve to "be content, in work,/To do the thing we can, and not presume/to fret because it's little." Both conclusion and plot grate horribly against the hard centre of the poem, which fomented with rage at the postured innocence she must assume to survive: "And I? . . . I was a good child. . . . A meek and manageable child. Why not? I did not live, to have the faults of life . . ." and adamantly rejects patronage: "I'll not ask for grace; your scorn is better." It laments the limitations of a woman's lot, ironically bitter at the pettiness surrounding her aunt:

*She had lived, we'll say
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
A quiet life, which was not life at all
(But that, she had not lived enough to know),
Between the vicar and the county squires . . .
The poor club exercised her Christian gifts
Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats. . . .*

Here we see those grand Victorian absolutes in action. And Aurora finds them horribly risible,

⁴ *Aurora Leigh and Other Poems*. By ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING. Introduced by CORA KAPLAN. The Women's Press, £2.95.

spitting out her frustration in broken syntax: "I, alas,/A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage. . . . Very kind./Bring the clean water, give out the clean seed", and in a radical refusal to submit: "I said:/We'll live, Aurora! we'll be strong./The dogs are on us—but we will not die. . . ."

Such anger eventually silences its outburst with a whimper, betraying its impotence. Like the texts to which it is indebted and of which it is a rich collage—amongst others *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley*, *The Princess*, *Alton Locke*—*Aurora Leigh* finds itself translating political issues into personal ones in order to resolve them. It displaces a protest against patriarchy into an uneasy romance—but the prison unto which it dooms its characters is no less confining for seeming chosen. The poem fails to connect sexual with class issues (though is guilty about poverty/injustice/neglect) and its analysis of patriarchy is necessarily incomplete as a result. Nevertheless, it's a powerful dirge lamenting the mournful cost of sustaining such a cultural order:

⁵ *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*. By EDGAR JOHNSON. Allen Lane, £9.00.

⁶ *Dickens: Letters. Vol. 4. 1844-6*. Edited by KATHLEEN TILLOTSON. Oxford University Press, £20.00.

*The civiliser's spade grinds horribly
On dead men's bones, and cannot turn up soil
That's otherwise than fetid. . . .*

THESE NEGATIVE READINGS of Victorian culture are confirmed when we come to Dickens' accounts of the cost of duty's "mournful necessity." His own life appears a shining example of Smiles' self-help philosophy, rising from the slums of Soho to the palatial Gad's Hill Place through "economy, self-denial and better habits." Edgar Johnson's authoritative biographical account of Dickens⁵—now re-published in a revised and slightly abridged form—tells of the dark side underlying such public triumph.

His letters too betray the high price of success. The latest volume of Dickens' correspondence in the marvellous Oxford series,⁶ excellently annotated and luxuriously long (1,087 letters, 284 previously unpublished), covers the period between the end of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *The Chimes*, and the opening of *Dombey and Son*. The letters are packed with details of his domestic duties in London, with his household of children ("the Pigs") and women ("the Dolls"), with charitable activities, lectures, work, work, and more work. He makes constant resolutions to push himself



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harder, "to avoid all dinners", to rise early, take cold showers, write longer hours: "I have been obliged to take a solemn vow and make strict compact with myself, that I will not go out to any meal, or other enjoyment this week." For all his comic vein, he takes his seriousness seriously, calling Arthur Stanley's *Life of Dr Arnold* "the text-book of my faith", adding "I respect and reverence him beyond all expression", desiring "humbly to imitate him." And he gives earnestness its importance: "Give me that credit for being in earnest", he asks, defending his tendency to write prose as blank verse on these hallowed grounds: "It is not an affectation in me. . . . I run into it, involuntarily and unconsciously, when I am very much in earnest. I even do so, in speaking. . . . I attach much less importance to it than I do to earnestness." Against this solid satisfaction of doing one's duty, the trip to France, Switzerland, Italy in these years appears something of an interlude. Driven by "that unspeakable restless something" to move "towards the Sun", Dickens sends back superlative descriptions of hedonism and colour, at their height in his worship of the oblivion of the Mediterranean's "solemn, impenetrable blue"—"it suggested", he wrote to Maclise in 1844, "the idea of Styx. It looks as if a draught of it . . . would wash out everything else, and make a great blue blank of your intellect."

There are few such glimpses of bliss in Dickens' novels: like Tennyson, he presents his ideals off-stage. Much more clearly than Tennyson, Dickens spells out the consequences of a work ethic which places duty and self-denial as the primary virtues. Despite the overt preaching of seriousness and restraint (Clennam, say, in *Little Dorrit*: "Duty on Earth, restitution on earth, action on earth; these first, as the first steep steps upward"), there are no images of work and duty in his fiction which are other than negative or, at best, ambiguous. From Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* (falling into "Hell-Shaft" for his devotion to work), to Jenny Wren, the "industrious little Busy-Body" making dolls' clothes in *Our Mutual Friend* (she is a cripple), the work ethic is invariably destructive. Dickens directs irony against the solid plodders ("Your qualities are not shining, my dear child, but they are steady and useful", says Turveydrop in *Bleak House*) whose blind application doesn't take them very far (even Daniel Doyce, who "soberly worked on for work's sake" in *Little Dorrit*). The promise of Paradise for those who submit to the ruling ethic is being broken. And the scars inflicted by that ethic are deepest in Dickens'

images of home and family life. Contrary to the long-popular view of Dickens as some bland Father Christmas figure bestowing blessings and benevolence on domestic hearth and home, he has few happy families. The norm is not a family of smilers, but a set of malcontents. And we find that the solid Victorian home is rather close to the haunted house in Hitchcock's *Psycho*: full of frustration and neurosis. From the cold, "masculine" world of *Dombey and Son* to the distorted family relations of *Little Dorrit* (where the home interacts with parallel themes of imprisonment), from the hard facts of *Hard Times* (Freud called it Dickens' cruellest work—one can see why) to the deadlock of *Bleak House*, the pattern is one of blighted and miserable family units.

DAVID GRYLLE'S INTERESTING study of the changing attitudes towards filial/parental responsibilities in 19th-century fiction⁷ recognises this tension in Dickens' portrayal of family duty: "There is a curious dichotomy in his presentation of family life. Though frequently extolling filial affection, he is rather reluctant to portray it." The result is that "the merriment is flaccid compared with the pain." Grylls interprets this ambivalence as part of the tension between a "hard" Puritanism and a "soft" Romanticism in Victorian parental postures. On the one hand, a spare-the-rod-spoil-the-child rule of obedience and piety; on the other, a defence of childhood autonomy and innocence—the heritage of Rousseau's *Émile* ("the very words *duty* and *obligation* . . . will be excluded from his vocabulary") and of Wordsworth. In the novel, we move from Jane Austen's support ("Dutifulness is often a sign or test of virtue . . . she insinuates throughout her work consistent approval of filial duty and parental authority"—Grylls) to Dickens' confused attack (Caddy Jellyby asking "Where's Ma's duty as a parent?" in *Bleak House*). Confused, because he is unsure what he is attacking. The household had long served as an image of the state—and this metaphor returned with new strength in the early 19th century. Home meant state: father meant God. In Grylls' words, "The Evangelicals revitalised patriarchy by their explicit insistence that parents were surrogates for God." A classic best-seller, *The History of the Fairchild Family* (1847), has father proclaiming to son Henry: "I stand in the place of God to you, whilst you are a child"; his absence is told in a chapter entitled (un-ironically) "The Absence of God."

⁷ *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. By DAVID GRYLLE. Faber & Faber, £6.50.

DICKENS' DEFENCE of childhood and exposure of the scars of family life attacks the state in microcosm. He gives the local experience of patriarchy,

where it hurts most. His attack is moral rather than political—and his solutions are correspondingly romantic—but it wreaks havoc with the unflawed face of Victorian culture. *Hard Times* is a painful fable of the fatal consequences of repression. Gradgrind may only have been trying to “discharge his duty”, but it creates a wound in Louisa which can never be healed. The cost of renunciation of instinctive desire for the sake of a patriarchal order is seen at its highest in Louisa’s view of her life as dust: “She unconsciously closed her hand, as if upon a solid object, and slowly opened it, as though she were releasing ash.” Given this cost—and Dr Grylls reminds us of the authoritarian images of father-son relationships exposed in Meredith’s *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, Butler’s *Way of All Flesh*, Gosse’s *Father and Son*—it is striking how reluctant Victorian authors (and, it seems, their modern critics) are to seek out the root causes of such suffering. There is a constant refusal to move into a more exacting critique of patriarchy.

There seems to be a need to collude with Tennyson’s reading of the world as a place of inevitable frustration, that it is part of “the human condition” that “thou should’st fail from thy desire.” Despite its contradictions and deceptions, Tennyson’s fiction is still the supreme one:

*O days and hours, your work is this
To hold me from my proper place . . .
That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet. . . .*

They all fall back into self-inflicted prisons. In Victorian fiction, sons read their pains as peculiar to their own father figures; wives/daughters/widows read their frustrations as greed rather than need; the texts themselves apologise for having caused so much trouble. It’s impossible not to see the Victorians through a Freudian looking-glass. They were so determined to bind with briars their joys and desires, however suicidal or bloody the results. “Take the matter as you find it”, advises *Shirley*: “ask no questions; utter no remonstrances: it is your best wisdom. You expected bread, and you have got a stone; break your teeth on it, and don’t shriek because the nerves are martyred.” In no other period is there a literature which pictures so graphically the price of patriarchal repression. Nothing could be more eloquent than the tensions, ambiguities and silences of Victorian texts as they betray the crippling consequences of worshipping duty and earnestness as inflexible deities. Reluctant to examine the implications, they avidly swallow their stones and grasp at the scorpions to hand. Meanwhile, the contradictory texts tell the tale only too well, pointing behind the decorous and grave façade towards Bleeding Heart Yard.

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A Young Engine-Driver Called Hunt

Reflections on Light Verse—By ANTHONY THWAITE

THE TROUBLE from the start, of course, is the term itself: Light Verse. Others have slid round the problem—Comic Verse, Comic and Curious Verse, etc.—but it remains. I don't much believe in the helpfulness of dictionary definitions: the OED (which Kingsley Amis quotes in the marvellously opinionated Introduction to his new anthology)¹ says of *light* ("literature, plays, music, etc.") "requiring little mental effort; amusing, entertaining." There used to be something called the BBC Light Programme, now split between various neutral numerals, and Festivals of Light Music. Even today, one can sometimes hear a cheery radio announcer jollying one into listening to "a light-hearted look at" something or other: I switch off. No writer welcomes the description *lightweight*; that's for boxers and suits.

One isn't encouraged to think well of the stuff. When I was about sixteen and churning out long lengths of heroically Neo-Apocalyptic verse, serious to the point of stupefaction, my senior English master gruffly opined—not just to me, but to the whole class—that "the moment a poet starts to write light verse, he's finished." This judgment haunted me for about twenty-five years, ensuring that no line of verse I wrote until quite recently was capable of raising the ghost of a smile. In 1955 Robert Graves, in the course of his Clark Lectures at Cambridge, "The Crowning Privilege" (transposed by someone at the time as "The Clowning Privilege", since Graves seemed determined to play the fool from beginning to end), included among his swipes at Auden the following:

Just before World War II he emigrated to the United States, subsequently becoming a U.S. citizen, and there developed his real talent, which is for light verse.

So much—is the supposition—for anybody who bothers to think twice about W. H. Auden. Only the other day I was telling a young friend who is a university lecturer in English that I was considering writing about *The New Oxford Book of Light Verse*. I had the impression even before I'd finished the sentence that I had said something unfortunate: I could hear those disapproving

¹ *The New Oxford Book of Light Verse*, Edited by KINGSLEY AMIS. Oxford University Press, £4.25.

Leavisian inverted commas round "New" and "Oxford" and "Light" and "Verse." (The inverted commas round "Kingsley Amis" probably took on the force of certain cartouches round Egyptian hieroglyphics, signifying total exclusion.) "I would never think", she said, "of picking up a book with a title like that."

Well, presumably Oxford University Press work on the assumption that others will think differently. Forty years after Auden's *Oxford Book of Light Verse* the Amis *New Oxford* appears, handsomely got up like all Oxford anthologies, and blurbishly drawing attention to the marked differences it has from its famous predecessor. Amis's is "lighter in heart", for one thing, we are told—at which some hearts, not necessarily belonging to severe professionals, may sink. Pressing on into the Introduction, we find the editor in Johnsonian fig from the very beginning:

I must now attempt what I hardly had to think of at all, except as a rather daunting prospect, while I was putting this anthology together, and try to define light verse, or at least propose some general remarks about it that shall bear on my selection.

My illustrious predecessor was not much help to me here. . . .

Auden's 1938 introduction is in his most clipped, didactic, schoolmasterly (or preacherly) tone, the Reverend Wystan Auden doing his trinitarian stuff:

Behind the work of any creative artist there are three principal wishes. . . . Three kinds of poetry have been included. . . . It is significant that so many of these poets either died young like Keats, or went mad like Hölderlin, or ceased producing good work like Wordsworth. . . .

But it is Auden's peroration to which Amis seems chiefly to object:

Virtues which were once nursed unconsciously by the forces of nature must now be recovered and fostered by a deliberate effort of the will and the intelligence. In the future, societies will not grow of themselves. They will either be made consciously or decay. A democracy in which each citizen is as fully conscious and capable of making a rational choice, as in the

past has been possible only for the wealthier few, is the only kind of society which in the future is likely to survive for long.

In such a society, and in such alone, will it be possible for the poet, without sacrificing any of his subtleties of sensibility or his integrity, to write poetry which is simple, clear, and gay.

For poetry which is at the same time light and adult can only be written in a society which is both integrated and free.

I have quoted Auden's concluding sentences at length because only in this way can one grasp the severity of his notions of social engineering— notions which can't quite be deflected or deflated, by saying, as Amis does, that: "The principle of checks and balances, and I, will be satisfied if another generation altogether sees in mine a reactionary anthology." This convinced truculence of Amis's is touched off by reported remarks of Peter Porter's, who called Auden's a "revolutionary anthology" and who said that it "chang[ed] the sensibility of a generation." "Revolutionary" is of course a rag not only so red but so discredited as an epithet to astute polemicists such as Amis that one would fear to use it in his presence. But I can see—and I hope others can too—what Porter meant when he used the word of Auden's extraordinary book. I can also understand what he meant about changing the sensibility of a generation: "I wonder what generation he had in mind", says Amis, to which the straight bibliographical answer is contained in those collections of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s—Michael Roberts and J. M. Cohen and Dwight Macdonald and all—which almost certainly took their cue from the 1938 Oxford Book.

Kingsley Amis is hard on several categories of light verse and on many supposed practitioners of it. Nonsense, including the Lear Limerick, is depressing; so is the epigram. Parodies are good only when they can be read without reference to the object parodied. Pope isn't included because he requires notes. Dryden is out because *Absalom and Achitophel*, "a great poem, and one of the cleverest in the language, is nearly all high verse with what amount to accidental light-verse connections." No Burns, because what Burns has is "what I will call a genial gravity." As for most modern stuff, what disables it is that "when what is presumably aspiring to be high verse abandons form, a mortal blow is dealt to light verse, to which form has always been of the essence"; and Amis demonstrates formlessness, rather gratuitously and arbitrarily, by printing part of a high-verse poem by Alan Brownjohn, unattributed in the text but noted in the Acknowledgments at the back.

NABOKOV

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HAVING KEPT ALL that out, what has he put in? The anthology begins with Stephano's song from *The Tempest*, Jonson's "Giles and Joan", and a couple of Anons ("not my favourite poet", says Amis. "If he were good or very good, I feel he would have a full name and a pair of dates.") It begins to get into its stride with the Restoration, which opened up satire, or at any rate a kind of satire Amis can respond to: bits of Butler's *Hudibras*, Marvell's "The Character of Holland", Defoe's *The True-Born Englishman*, and of course Rochester—though three poems, including the impromptu squib on Charles II, seems short measure for the wicked Earl; also, someone—the editor or OUP?—has removed a rude bisexual quatrain from "The Disabled Debauchee", but I don't propose to restore it in these pages. Swift is here, and "The Vicar of Bray" (more Anon—and picked up later by Colin Ellis, by Ted Pauker—of whom more anon—and by John Heath-Stubbs), John Byrom, and sixteen lines from Dr Johnson.

Still, these get us only 44 pages into a book that has 329 pages of poems. What fills up the remainder is pretty well the 19th century (*vers de société*, defined by Amis in section VII of his Introduction; parodies; and the small amount of nonsense that the editor can stand) and a very selective, interesting and instructive view of the 20th century, though with such obvious gaps that they must—with an editor both learned and impatient—be deliberate. In the 1930s, Auden allowed the last and the present century a huge amount of "popular" verse, almost all of it anonymous or filtered through a variety of oral forms—"The Man on the Flying Trapeze", "Honey, Take a Whiff on Me", "Cocaine Lil", "The Dying Airman", etc., etc. Amis has little truck with this sort of thing. He likes Byron, Praed, Calverley, the obvious items from Lewis Carroll, and a fair bit of W. S. Gilbert. After that, there's the prolific and skilful J. K. Stephen (almost the type case of a man who was a pure

19th-century light versifier), Housman, Belloc, Chesterton, and a lot of one-offs in between, from Kenneth Grahame's "Song of Mr Toad" to a nice "Reminiscence" by someone called Wallace Irwin which I don't remember having seen before.

I began to get a bit worried when I reached the earlier part of the 20th century. J. C. Squire, for example, in spite of his crassnesses about *The Waste Land* and other things, was not only a better "serious" poet now and then than he has been taken for but a consummate parodist; yet he is given only one piece, and by no means one of his best. There's the usual Eliot "Practical Cats" quota, Kingsmill's Housman parodies (they never seem to me as good as Housman's own funny poems), offerings by the standard entertainers such as A. P. Herbert, D. B. Wyndham Lewis, J. B. Morton and Noël Coward. But it's at this point that Kingsley Amis, for all his strictures on the terrible 20th century, particularly in its later manifestations, both perks up and settles down to what one feels is the genuine run of his taste. Roy Campbell starts off at the top of page 240 with his famous but still applicable (and not only to some South African novelists) "On Some South African Novelists", and is followed by eleven stunners by Anon, nine of them limericks. All the limericks are what that same English master, mentioned at the beginning of my piece, would have called "doubtful." Skipping over some rather tedious (but—I take the point—hitherto generally unavailable) Anthony Powell, one is into fairly generous and well-chosen selections from Betjeman and Auden. Then some verses by Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, which for the first time make me realise why Dylan Thomas found him such good company; Osbert Lancaster being funny in words, not pictures; and a couple by Peter de Vries, whom I knew only as a frenetically comic novelist.

THE TWO GREAT discoveries by Kingsley Amis are names unfamiliar to me, and I imagine to anybody else: Victor Gray (b. 1917) and Ted Pauker (same year). Gray's nine limericks display many talents, from mastery of multiple rhyme ("What a man!/ottoman/bare bottom, Anne", commemorating the Brontës) to a brisk puncturing of expectations:

*A young engine-driver called Hunt
Once took out his engine to shunt,
Saw a runaway truck,
And by shouting out, "Duck!"
Saved the life of the fellow in front.*

Pauker has a stronger political, or socio-political, line. Three of his four poems are pastiches or

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parodies (Praed, Chesterton, "The Vicar of Bray"), but they bear out Amis's point about the successful parody transcending what it parodies. Gray and Pauker invest new territories of light verse with considerable panache: the conquests are noteworthy.

After that—well, it's a bit patchy, to say the least. Gavin Ewart, who gets cleverer and funnier as he gets older, shouldn't have been represented solely by his fine quatrain, now about 40 years old, "Miss Twye." It's good to see Roger Woddis, that stalwart of the *New Statesman*, taken seriously as a light poet; but not on the strength of the two included. Look for his full-length book, just out.² Amis could have chosen much better from his *New Statesman* Weekend Competitors—not only from Peter Veale, Edward Blishen and Martin Fagg (all here) but from E. O. Parrott, Russell Lucas, W. F. N. Watson and at least a dozen others. Philip Larkin is decently represented, with the bonus of an uncollected poem ("Fiction and the Reading Public"), and Amis has chosen quite well from his own work—but I'd have preferred "Something Nasty in the Bookshop" (sometimes entitled "A Bookshop Idyll") to his Cockney Baudelaire "The Helbatrawss." Some of George MacBeth's *Orlando* sequence is included, though havered over rather gracelessly in the editor's Introduction. There should have been more Peter Porter. John Fuller's "Blues" ought to have been identified as an entry for a *New Statesman* competition demanding poems written entirely in three-letter words. Simon Curtis (b. 1943), who concludes the anthology, doesn't really deserve his place.

Despite Amis's strictures about the "moderns", and given his apparent penchant for including them nevertheless, it's odd that there is nothing from Ogden Nash (he includes de Vries and Phyllis McGinley, so it can't be a straight matter of "no Americans"), Cummings, Plomer, Rickword, Updike, Edmund Wilson. Notions of "form", or lack of it, may have prevented him from picking such small classics of the past twenty years as Edwin Brock's sardonic "Song of the Battery Hen" (far sharper than, and written long before, Pam Ayres's similarly titled and by now better-known effort) and his "Five Ways to Kill a Man"; but Clive James's extremely formal—and technically varied—verse satires (from *Peregrine Prykke* on) and verse letters should have had at least some place here. Pace Douglas Dunn in ENCOUNTER a few months back, the James phenomenon isn't at all a matter of a self-admiring clique going through its self-regarding paces; the hits are palpable, the per-

formances dashing. If Amis had looked a bit further afield, he could have found attractive recent poems by Gerda Mayer, Paul Groves and Kit Wright. His neglect of the Liverpool lot may be just hard-bitten, as I dare say mine is; but if Adrian Henri and Roger McGough have any place in any anthology, it is as writers of quite good light verse—better light verse, anyway, than some of the moderns Amis puts on to the field.

THE NEW OXFORD BOOK OF LIGHT VERSE will slay its thousands, but I could wish that Kingsley Saul Amis had had it in him to slay his tens of thousands. Splendid though his Introduction is in its chin-leading contentiousness, and attractive though his selection is, there could have been a better and more radical (sorry) book—one which would have been a true 1970s balance to Auden's still indispensable book of the 1930s, and one which might have confounded both my old English master and my young university lecturer friend. As it is, one must be grateful to the editor for Gray and Pauker and more than a handful of other unsung, until now unprinted (and sometimes almost unprintable) persons. But in the end I wonder whether Kingsley Amis has taken light verse quite seriously enough.

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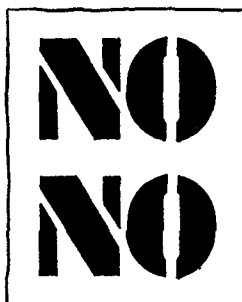
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EAST & WEST

Letter from Berlin

A Young Man in Opposition

By Nico Huebner



THE CONFLICTS many people in East Berlin and in the *DDR* are experiencing result from the political and ideological influence exerted from above. Ever since its foundation the *SED* has undertaken to produce an image of the world that suits itself. After all, the people of

the *DDR* have never actually voted the *SED* into government. The attempt to develop "socialist consciousness" inevitably took the form of state coercion. But the coercive character of a régime that relies on Communist ideas has not only

TWENTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD Nico Huebner was recently arrested in East Berlin. He had refused to do his military service in the East German "National Army", invoking the post-War Allied notion of the demilitarised status of the old capital city. In the past he had not endeared himself to the East German authorities. At the age of 16 he left the communist "Free German Youth" (*FDJ*); he also organised petitions against the lack of freedom in the *DDR*. At the beginning of 1977 he made his first application to move westward to the *Bundesrepublik*. He was barred from taking a Hebrew course in the theology department of the Humboldt University in East Berlin. Nico Huebner's parents are both members of the *SED*, in influential positions.

This text by Nico Huebner got through to West Berlin before his arrest for refusing military service. It offers an insight into the ways in which a young generation, brought up completely under a Marxist-Leninist régime, liberate themselves and turn to critical oppositional ideas.

become apparent outwardly, through the police, the Ministry for State Security, the Party and other organisations, it has also taken firm root in ideology itself.

The development of "lower to higher", i.e. of capitalism to socialism, is deemed to be inevitable. The triumphant march of socialism is supposed to be unstoppable. Anyone who will not work for it is "reactionary." Critics and opponents are all given the stamp "*Reaktionär*." Perception of the actual world is subjected to the strait-jacket of ideological concepts. In this way what is "progressive" is clearly established (and encouraged) and what is "reactionary" and to be fought. "Reactionary" always means those who are not in agreement with the *SED*.

So from the outset all reason is repudiated. *SED* ideology is not interested in *pro et contra*, in existing through alternate proposal and counter-proposal, but only in abbreviation and repression so that, ultimately, any free and critically aware conceptualisation succumbs to its logical reasoning.

The process of anchoring the attitudes desired by the régime in the minds of children begins in the cradle and in the kindergarten. The faces of Marx, Engels, Lenin, of Eric Honecker and Willi Stoph look down on them from the walls in fatherly fashion. They are told stories about their Socialist Homeland. This is when they hear about the "beautiful country with its happy working people", and everything would be fine were it not for certain "enemies of happiness and prosperity." In this and similar ways a "class awareness" is supposed to be developed. By "class awareness" is meant, of course, everything that serves the *SED*.

IN CONTRAST TO HIS CHILDHOOD, a young person already possesses a store of experiences from the everyday Communist world of the *SED* state. His critical awareness comes from practical experience because the almost empty concepts he has learnt and with which he is supposed to understand "real socialism" are of no use to him whatsoever. But since his consciousness has been indoctrinated since earliest childhood, it is hardly possible for a young person to acquire reasonably developed theoretical views emerging from experience.

He rejects Marxism-Leninism as totally worthless. But in doing so the young person is usually left without any theory at all and persists in mere opposition without any palpable alternative. He is systematically kept away from any other political, philosophical, and cultural currents. And so, often from his 16th year on, he develops a destructive nihilism by rejecting all values.

A "rational gap" appears in his views. His adolescent emotional response is to fill it with the

modish insignia of Western fashion products, American and West German symbols, which are stuck and sewn on to trousers, jackets, and shirts. Protest soon loses its clear rational character.

IT IS ONLY RARELY POSSIBLE for the typical "DDR youth" to replace Communist thought forms by other intellectual conceptions. However, the "Youth Clubs" of the churches do represent a kind of alternative. Here young people can relax from ideological stress, integrate themselves into a group, and feel free to a certain extent. Christianity offers an ethical and moral resting-place. It gets closer to the real world by distancing itself from the ideology of the SED. The "Youth Clubs" have succeeded in doing what is forbidden in the DDR outside the protection of the major Christian churches. They have become discussion centres. Christianity offers the chance to avoid succumbing to pessimism, through community with others.

What Euro-Communism presents is a more acceptable offer of Communist ideas. Almost nobody is for the type of communism that is practised in the DDR. But many are for the idea that Human Rights should and can be realised in a socialist society. By accepting the ideas of Euro-Communism, one can throw off the thought patterns that have been drummed into one in early years without immediately being shipwrecked. Many young people sympathise with Robert Havemann and Wolf Biermann. But to whom else should they turn? Virtue comes of necessity. When the number of political possibilities is limited, of course Professor Havemann is better than Prime Minister Honecker. There is a complete lack of any central liberal alternative, and unfortunately politicians in the *Bundesrepublik* refuse to offer moral support to the other half of Germany.

Euro-Communism in the DDR is the only product of a conceptual manipulation which people dare not throw off for fear of the gaping emptiness beyond. When dealing with Euro-Communism in the DDR one must make a distinction. Euro-Communists are critics of the DDR régime, that is, they do criticise the régime quite fundamentally, but they basically accept the theories and ideologies of the system. Critics of the régime do not want democratic conditions, they only want to "humanise" the existing régime. Characteristic of this is the narrowness of their political tolerance. Their limits are determined by ideology. So the critics of the régime do not understand that the conditions of the régime have their roots in the system itself.

IT IS QUITE DIFFERENT in the case of the opponents of the régime. They assume that conceptual

manipulation, that spying on all those who have different political opinions, that totalitarian enforcement of the orders and interests of the leading élite through a bureaucratic party and official machine, are not only part of the régime, but also feed on the roots of the system itself. Communist theories of society, if they are put into practice in the DDR, will always produce more or less dictatorial régimes. Opponents therefore assume that régimes of the Communist type cannot be "humanised" by external reforms, but rather that morally justifiable societies can only be developed and maintained where the only restriction placed on the freedom of each person is that of a similar freedom for all.

"NORMALCY" for the DDR citizen is "*geistige Republikflucht*", a kind of inner desertion or an "intellectual escapism from the Republic." All the mass media give one-sided biased reports. A few church newspapers are the only exceptions. But even here there are the "Christians for Socialism" who are busy organising themselves. Therefore, for the vast majority, Western television and other West German media are the only means of acquiring wider and more pluralistic information. It would, however, be a mistake to think that these media have the same effect as they do in the West. News from Germany and from all over the world is followed with interest and inner engagement, but these are not the daily problems of the DDR. One allows the Western world to flow over one like an exciting film: stimulating and almost tangible, and yet at the same time infinitely far away.

WHEN AN INHABITANT of the DDR has decided to leave communism in all its forms behind him and occupies himself with trying to get to the West, his interests and emotions change noticeably. He is suddenly conscious that the problems broached in the West are also relevant to his own. Many applicants, especially, suddenly concern themselves intensively with all-German problems. German citizenship takes on a special value. One always knew one was a German, but one was always a German of a special kind.

West Berliners and West Germans have never been regarded as foreigners. But only now does the unifying principle begin to take effect, of all being Germans. Before it was "you" Germans and "we" Germans, but from now on it is "all of us" Germans. More than before, the minds of people in the DDR are noticeably affected positively or negatively when there are new developments in Germany. And one day many begin to notice that intellectually they are already living in the West and are no longer prepared to

compromise with the totalitarian DDR régime. The breach with the DDR becomes too deep.

Those who want to carry on living in the DDR, it is interesting to note, although they often express their incomprehension and their doubt, express themselves defensively. They think they have to justify to themselves and to others why they won't risk the jump into the cold water. What is their justification? Essentially, latent fear of the new unknown that one only sees from a distance. They want to live in a certain security and peaceableness. One could perhaps call them the "DDR Conservatives." The only thing they want to do is earn money, while at the same time

blowing off a little steam with political jokes. Their position is characterised by a deep scepticism.

IN THIS ATMOSPHERE anybody who makes an application to leave finds himself in social isolation. One's own experiences are only communicable in terms of the *gesamtdeutschen Bewusstsein*, the all-German consciousness of the DDR dissidents. In addition there are the daily chicaneries of the régime: demotion at work, discrimination in the school system to the point of effective debarring from education, investigation by the ABV (special agents of the

Thoughts on Our



IT IS MORE THAN a year since the murder of the Federal State Prosecutor, Siegfried Buback, began the chain of new-style attacks which temporarily ended with the hijacking and liberation of the Lufthansa plane in East Africa and the murder of Hanns-Martin Schleyer. Since then, and it's now a good half year, there has been

silence on the Terrorist front in the Bundesrepublik. Not however in Switzerland, or in Austria, or in Italy.

The murders in Rome, the jeering at the dead bodyguards that followed the threats and blackmail, the unfortunate prisoner they kidnapped and the cruel game they played with him until they put eleven bullets into his chest, all this is of a dark piece with the methods and intentions of the terrorist attack in Cologne. The obvious internationalism of terrorism is more significant than personal collaboration, which is also involved in all probability, but as yet has not been proved. This much is clear: we are dealing with an international attack on the states of Europe and their social orders.

The aim is always the same. It is not to free comrades and fellow-terrorists. What would the German bandits really have got out of it if the members of the old "hard core" had been handed over to them? No, their aim is to reveal the powerlessness of the state and ultimately to destroy it totally. Whether or not the old Marxist belief is behind it—that once the "capitalistic" state has been destroyed the earthly paradise will follow of its own accord—is quite irrelevant. The "first generation" of terrorists, including the unfortunate Ulrike Meinhof, may well really have cherished this superstition: her successors, hardly. For them

the deadly game has become an end in itself. The lust for power, for trials, sentences and executions, for the spreading of fear and anxiety, is reward enough. In practice the distinction is of little importance.

I HOPE NO ONE WILL be deceived by the six-month respite in Germany. The brigands would be abandoning themselves, and their lives, of which they are so proud with the arrogant pride of the only just creatures on earth, would lose all meaning if they were not to plot new attacks with their usual diligence.

It is the task of every general staff, especially in a state which for its part has decided not to conduct aggressive war, to anticipate and be prepared for any possible enemy attack. That presents difficulties. The attacker knows what he is going to do; the mere defender does not know how and where the attacker will appear next. This disadvantage is unavoidable, yet one must overcome it. What must no longer happen, one would like to think, is to wait for another terrorist blow to fall before forming a "grossen Krisenstab", a "major crisis council" and starting to ponder what to do and how far to go. That's no way to win a war.

"War"? After the murders in Rome the leader of the Republican Party, La Malfa, declared that Italy should regard itself as being in a "state of war." Personally I set little store by the word. It is not a question of words, but of the situation and of understanding it. This situation is essentially new; small wonder we haven't an accurate word for it. However, the comparison with war is justified, not in all but in some essential respects.

SUPPOSEDLY, THE ATTACKER will not be able to use the same methods again. Taking a few hostages (Stockholm) or a single one (Cologne, Rome) did not bring the success they hoped for. With a hundred hostages or many more than a hundred it might well have been different. We must remember at this point that in the case of the Palestinian hijackers in Mogadishu (and elsewhere) we had good fortune in the midst of misfortune. Ruthless themselves, they

police) and the Ministry for State Security.

After the authorities have discovered and identified one's circle of friends and acquaintances, they summon each one to an interview with the *Volkspolizei*, or with the cadre-leader of the Party, or make it plain in other ways that it would be better if they broke off this "negative social contact." Otherwise they will just have to think again about their jobs, their studies, and so on.

The applicant himself is informed of the complete hopelessness of his intention: (a) making such an application to leave is not provided for in the law; (b) the applicant is interpreting the

laws one-sidedly, for Human Rights are still to be achieved in Chile and in South Africa, but not inside Socialism, where they have already been established; (c) therefore an emigration application is against the law and must be "dismissed" i.e. not refused; (d) fresh applications are not accepted or considered, and are therefore quite senseless.

So THE APPLICANT is forced to create his own value system, or sink into resignation. I occupied myself with the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer as a defence against external chicanery and as a relief from the burden of isolation and in-

Anti-Terrorist Illusions

were not equal to the ruthlessness of their mission. That Lufthansa hijacker, "Captain Martyr", was a murderer—yes, but a poor idiot as well. One must make it explicit: If the hijackers had been Germans, in the Stockholm style but with many more lives at their disposal, they would have put the Bonn government under such pressure that it would have been very hard indeed to resist them.

In this connection I have been reading the recent number of the Munich magazine "Zeitbühne." For a very long time I was not a friend of the editor, William S. Schlamm; now I am forced to agree with him, not always, but more often than I should like. Schlamm considers the possibility that the German terrorists might get hold of a nuclear device, make it into a time-bomb, hide it in a large German city, and then begin to blackmail in a way that will make all previous attempts seem like a parlour game. Impossible? If so, then tell us why. If not, then must we not prepare ourselves even for this most extreme development? For never before has so much power, to murder and destroy, been in the hands of so many fools.

IN SPAIN I WAS RECENTLY TOLD that the leader of a North African state (whose name I won't mention but everyone can guess it for themselves) is financing the supporters of autonomy for Andalusia, where previously, in contrast to Catalonia, there was no such movement. And it's well known that in Spain it's only a small step from autonomy to separatism. Why is this Mediterranean statesman acting in this way (the same man, as we've known for a long time, who has been financing "Catholic" terrorism in Ulster)? Out of sheer lust for power? For the satisfaction of avenging previous actual or supposed humiliations of Africa by the colonialists? Out of the desire to dissolve the old white empire-building society of European culture? Why shouldn't it please a politician like him, loaded with millions, to make a present of a couple of kilos of plutonium to German terrorists one day, just for the fun of it?

contingencies. It must be precise, open, and unstinting. Not to damage the present government of Germany, but to avoid terrible mistakes in the future (such as the ignoring of the warning given by an alert German citizen, which perhaps might have saved Schleyer's life). In his impressive speech in the Bundestag Alfred Dregger raised the question, supporting it with forceful examples, whether the whole "crisis council" was not ultimately more of a hindrance than a help. It is useless to duck this question for party-political reasons; it's a question of life and death.

As a mark of our deceptive half-year of peace, discussion about the intellectual background of European Terrorism has also fallen off. This is regrettable. Of course an investigation of this nature should be carried out with more subtle methods than are used in the pursuit of simple murderers. Heavy-handed methods are quite unsuitable. But mere ideological pronouncements such as that given out by Willy Brandt, according to which "the Terrorists are not Leftists", are no help either. If they are not of "the Left", that is "ultra-Leftists", what are they and where are they from? Rightists perhaps, Christian liberals, flat-earthers, neo-Nazis, ultra-conservatives?

Of course one could believe that they are a fundamentally new phenomenon and that they don't fit in anywhere in the old system of parties or political tendencies. But neither is it as simple as that. What was the arson of the Frankfurt department store by Andreas Baader and Gudrun Enslin, with which the whole trail of misery began, but a realisation of Professor Herbert Marcuse's "great refusal", only more fiery than the Californian aesthete had imagined it would be? And was Dr Marcuse not one of the inspirations of the New Left? We don't want any Joe McCarthys. Intellectual inquiry requires tact and a sense of proportion. But it will not be effected by simply refusing to acknowledge facts and interrelationships that are as clear as day.

Golo Mann
in Die Welt (Bonn)

CRITICISM OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED in the past is a necessary part of planning for the future and for all

security. "Meine Philosophie hat mir nichts eingebracht, aber sie hat mich vor vielem bewahrt (My philosophy has earned me nothing, but it has preserved me from many things)", Schopenhauer said about himself. It also has this function in East Germany today.

Schopenhauer's philosophy can best be understood where I am living. "Life presents itself as a continual process of deception, on the small scale and on the large. The promises it makes, it does not keep, except in cases where they show us how little desirable the thing was that we desired. In this way it is sometimes hope that deceives us, sometimes the thing hoped for. ..." This objective-pessimistic standpoint gets closer to the truth in

the DDR and yet leaves room for positive surprises.

Perhaps something will change, and the bloody border through Germany may be crossed without bloodshed. My own philosophical attitude stops me from building castles in the air and therefore preserves me from all too bitter disappointments. So I am preparing myself for a rather closer acquaintance with the justice of the régime, from inside, because it is quite possible for them simply to lock up every critic and would-be emigrant. Still, I will not bow down to a system which can only hold power by totalitarian manipulation, by spying on those who think (differently), by organised blackmail and official slander.

Lenin, with a Grin



Madrid

SANTIAGO CARRILLO, 63, secretary-general of the Spanish Communist Party (P.C.E.) for the past 18 years and Moscow's least favourite Euro-communist, reported to the party's ninth congress in Madrid last week, the first held in Spain since 1932. He asked the more than 1,400 delegates to endorse a political line that, by Communist criteria, continues to be nothing less than adventurous.

The congress came just a year after the party had been legalized by the government of Premier Adolfo Suárez González and a scant ten months after it won a disappointing 9% of the popular vote in general elections. The focal point of the five-day meeting, called "a Communist debate for democracy and socialism", was Carrillo's proposal to drop the party's "Leninist" label in favour of "Marxist, democratic and revolutionary."

Despite strong Soviet advice to the Spanish Communists to stay with Leninism, the congress

voted with Carrillo on Thesis XV, 968 to 248, to set a Communist precedent by dropping the party's Leninist label. With old Moscow friend La Pasionaria unaccountably absent and Carrillo grinning broadly, the delegates attempted to soften the blow by chanting "Lenin, Lenin, Lenin."

TIME

Madrid

To the Conference of the Spanish Communist Party the delegation of the Soviet party brought a reproduction of a famous portrait in Moscow of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. One of the important "Euro-Communist" resolutions at the conference deleted the word "Leninist" from the official name and programme. The portrait was given by the Russians to the Spanish Party leaders Carrillo and Pasionaria, who accepted it and turned to show it to the conference participants with ironic smiles on their lips.

FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE ZEITUNG

Paris

FRENCH COMMUNIST leader Georges Marchais yesterday rejected any change within the tightly-structured French Communist party following a wave of complaints against party policy by intellectuals in the movement.

He said that the party would not be turned into a debating club nor "would it let itself be torn apart by some vague petty bourgeois anarchism."

His statement, aimed at re-instilling discipline in the ranks, appeared in a report which took up five pages in today's party newspaper, "L'Humanité".

The newspaper said that Mr. Marchais had read the report to the 121-man party Central Committee yesterday and that it had been unanimously approved.

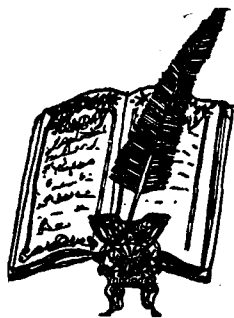
In his report, Mr. Marchais swept aside all arguments and reaffirmed that Communist policy was "correct" from start to finish.

Mr. Marchais has brought great changes to the party in its relations with the Soviet Union over the last three years but he still remains far from the stand adopted by the Spanish Communists, who have dropped references to Lenin as one of their mentors.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

AUTHORS & CRITICS

On Using Words



I AM a devoted admirer of Jan Morris. She is one of the finest descriptive journalists of our generation, who has climbed the Everest from journalism to literature. I know nobody living who can capture so vividly the feel of a distant city or the mood of a vanished age. So, if

she asserts that she is a fan of Humpty Dumpty and his perverse, arsy-versy use of language [ENCOUNTER, April], I must pretend to believe her, and fall in behind her banner, but—

There was a long pause. "Is that all?" Alice timidly asked.

I too have invoked the Great Egg on occasion. But I must confess that, like Alice, I find him an unsatisfactory and intimidating (as well as a very funny) person, with a bullying manner. He was, of course, exactly the sort of nit-picking pedant whom Jan Morris professes to abhor.

"I see you don't", said Alice. "If you can *see* whether I'm singing or not, you've sharper eyes than most", Humpty Dumpty remarked severely.

His translation of "Jabberwocky", though ingenious, is clearly nonsense. When he says "impenetrability", what he means is that

"we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life."

There's a nice knock-down meaning for you. But you could have knocked me down with a feather before I could have deduced his meaning without his helpful gloss.

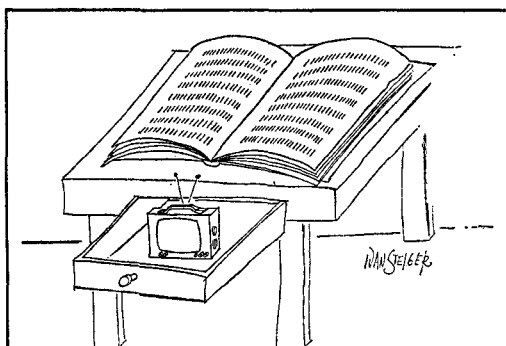
Such verbal hijacking is all very well for bullies like Humpty and creative geniuses like James Joyce. There are spells of linguistic magic in *Finnegans Wake*: Suffoclose, Shikespower, Seudodante, Anonymoses; no birdy aviar soar any wing to eagle it; the flushpots of Euston and the hanging garments of Marylebone; unda her brella mid piddle med puddle she ninnygoes nannyygoes nancing by. But I have never yet been able to swallow the book in more than small doses, and I still have only a hazy idea of the plot.

Those of us who are not truly creative writers use language for humbler purposes: to convey news, to cajole, to show off, to fill the gaping blank space on naked newsprint or the television screen with something, to make the best of a bad job, to convey meanings efficiently. The essence of communication is that words should mean roughly the same to the receiver as the sender. Of course, not many words have single, simple meanings like "gorse", which also is that rare word that has an exact synonym, "furze." Even an innocuous little word like "set" is given no less than 148 distinct main meanings by the Oxford English Dictionary. Such words as "truth" and "freedom" are so loaded with value judgments that they mean all things to all men. The wrestle with words and meanings is already intolerable in everyday, auld clathes and porridge contexts away from creative writing. If, in addition, Humpty Dumpty or James Joyce were to start writing articles for *The Times*, using words to mean whatever they wanted, few readers would penetrate beyond the impenetrability of their intros. There is not world enough or time for such reading on the Underground to work.

IF YOU ARE WRITING literature under your own name, you can afford to be a maverick with words. If you are good, like Jan Morris, you use words instinctively, as an artist, with no conscious need for rules or regulations. Those of us who work for corporate word-factories such as *The Times* or a Department of State cannot afford such licence. If all we everyday hacks used words and grammar to mean exactly what we chose them to mean, neither more or less, a Babel would issue from New Printing House Square, and we should lose all but our most patient readers: the ones who buy it not to read, but to carry under their arms to demonstrate that they can afford it. Anarchy in language is as nasty, brutish, and short-tempered as anarchy in society.

Of course, the Queen's English belongs to all of us, certainly not to the Queen, few of whose forbears have used the language with distinction or even assurance. Indeed, indeed the language evolves like a tide in the way that the mass of us decide to use it, majestically regardless of the prescriptions of the purists, even those of the great wordFowler himself (who was, *pace* Jan, quite as funny a person as Humpty Dumpty, and a great deal less arrogant). Nobody has any right to tell others how to use English, though language teachers are paid to do it to foreign students all the time. If you decide to call bread a stone, that is entirely your affair; but do not blame anybody else when you are hungry and break your teeth.

ENGLISH IS NOT threatened, but greatly enriched by the new words that are continually coming into it. The law of the market applies to words as well as to fish and other commodities. There are



The Jernalists

London

REPORTERS cannot spell, according to the long-standing opinion of their newspaper colleagues—and sub-editors have to correct their literary lapses. It looks as if things are not going to improve. When the National Council for the Training of Journalists tried to raise professional standards, it discovered that even students taking A-level English were often unable to spell and had little grasp of correct English.

Sixty-three of the 240 places on the council's current courses have been left unfilled. Most of the candidates were sixth-formers who had passed the English language O-level and many of them were studying for A-level English, yet they still flunked punctuation, spelling and vocabulary. The examiners were staggered by some of the howlers.

Asked to produce a sentence illustrating the meaning of "diffident," one candidate, perhaps with ambitions to become a Moscow correspondent, wrote:

"Mr Marx, the leading Soviet diffident, was arrested today."

Another wrote:

"The shareholders are angry that the diffident is so low."

"Innuendo" proved another difficult word. "There was a rising innuendo amongst the crowd", wrote one aspiring scribe. There were more problems with "inept." One candidate, with unconscious accuracy, said he had "an inept feeling about the situation." Another candidate had small boys "waiving" from trains to their mothers.

Even a sixth-former who had passed eight O-levels (including English language) and was sitting A-levels in history, English and Geography, showed that he did not understand such words as "supplant," "vacuous," "equitable" and "tacit."

A journalist who cannot understand words is like a bricklayer who cannot mix cement.

SUNDAY TIMES

eventually no buyers for the stale and the rotten, and they disappear. The ineffectual prescriptions of at any rate this pedant are directed not *de haut en bas* at outsiders. They are forged in the crude heat of a newspaper office, primarily to bring some little order into the verbal chaos of this particular commonplace user of words. I cannot see that the language has been enriched by Humpty's recent decision to say "legendary" when he means "famous"; "disinterested" when he means "uninterested"; Canute when he means a deluded reactionary; and "decimate" when he means "destroy." Contrariwise, he seems to have decimated or scotched, as he would say, the usefulness of the first in each pair of words for the rest of us.

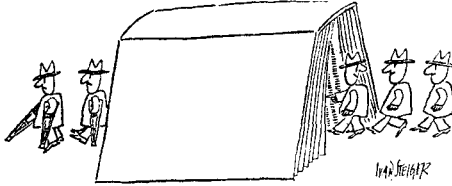
THANKFULLY, GRATEFULLY, hopefully, the language survives and grows, despite the idiosyncrasies of Humpty and the screams of anguish of the King Canutes. Poor old Canute, that great Sea King, knew all about the tides. He staged his wet demonstration to put down his sycophantic courtiers. English always has survived. Its best servants are its creative writers, whose coat-tails the rest of us cling to. But, up to our elbows in the greasy sink down in the kitchens, we scullions manufacture what rude rules we can for practical purposes, to make our job and the life of our readers easier. Our rules are roughly based on what comes naturally to writers like Jan Morris. Humpty Dumpty rules, OK? But we cannot all be Humpties. In his private sense of the word, IMPENETRABILITY.

Philip Howard

The Dictionary of Diseased English

"Oats: A grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people"

DR JOHNSON had no great opinion of the Scots or of Scotland and this particular entry in his *Dictionary* no doubt met with smiles and perhaps even the occasional laugh south of the Border and with rage and shaken fists north of it. Such a remark nowadays would lay its author open to the damning charge of racism, and as we well know there is no greater breach of morality or etiquette. Similarly, "a man is generally better pleased when he has a good dinner upon his table than when his wife talks Greek", would have brought Johnson into serious



Ongoing Situations

London

MURDERING the English language is a very popular crime all over the world. People just cannot, it seems, leave well alone. Charlady becomes office cleansing operator; an office becomes an individual work station; "ongoing" replaces the perfectly adequate "continuing"; "perception" elbows out the monosyllabic "view."

It is therefore heartening to be reminded that there exists in the USA a body called the National Council of Teachers of English Committee on Public Double-speak, and that it has just made its annual award. "Dishonourable mention" is the actual description, and it has gone for 1977 to the US Defence Department for calling the neutron bomb (a jolly little device that kills people but leaves buildings intact) a "radiation enhancement weapon."

The military have long had a tradition for this kind of thing. It springs not only from a desire to obfuscate but also to conceal the true horrors of war. "Pacification mission"—a favourite term in Vietnam days—sounds so much better than "bombing raid." But the runners up in the US for dishonourable mention were also fine examples of their kind, and not confined to the brutal and licentious. The US Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare was found advertising for

"an extremely confidential personal assistant . . . responsible for managing, performing and supervising work related to the operation of the Secretary's kitchen and eating area."

Or: "good cook needed."

We too, besieged as we are by neologisms, circumlocutions, euphemisms and other ugly or dishonest turns of speech, need a Council for the Protection of the English Language. Its first task would be to penalise anyone—speaker or writer—who adds the word "situation" to another, self-explanatory noun: as in fire situation or work situation. The BBC would be fined double as an offender who ought to be an exemplar. Its second task would be to have printed, and circulate to all Government departments, trade union headquarters, company boardrooms, and other places where language is persistently misused, an admonition against the tendency which Winston Churchill discerned in Ramsay MacDonald: "the gift of compressing the largest number of words into the smallest amount of thought."

SUNDAY TIMES

trouble with the feminist brigades and with those concerned to uphold both the letter and the law of Equal Opportunities.

Johnson has been called a bigot, in one place or another, for two centuries now and his reputation seems to have survived such attacks well enough. I regard him as my guardian angel in these matters and the quotation from him at the beginning of my own book was intended to serve as a talisman to protect me from harm. The excellent sales of the book, both in Britain and America, encourage me to believe that Johnson's spirit is watching over me; and I am grateful.

A BIGOT, I SUPPOSE, is the abusive term for someone who does not share one's own ideas and prejudices and Jan Morris is accusing me of compiling a kind of Bigot's Bible. She is also confessing that her sense of humour is not the same as mine. While freedom of speech, freedom of prejudice and freedom of humour still continue in Britain, neither of us can do much about this, although I suspect that Jan Morris might have one or two surprises if she were to accept my very well-intentioned invitation to lunch and actually meet me. She would discover an animal somewhat to the right of centre, who has never owned a pair of jeans, who lives in the country and does a great deal of hard manual work, who belongs to no political party and always finds voting a serious problem, who actively dislikes few things except squalor, trendiness, idleness and the world of the colour supplements, who spends a great deal of his time travelling around the world in search of new ideas, and who, on a modest income, gets more gentle pleasure out of life than the Left would consider possible or decent. She might also find a man whose concern for the English language was equal to her own, a fact which, sadly, the *Dictionary* does not seem to have communicated to her.

I HAVE NO CLAIM or wish to be considered a lexicographer. Like Johnson, I regard the dictionary as an art form, a vessel to be filled with whatever wine one pleases. Its alphabetical framework seems to me to provide a useful discipline, within which I enjoy working. But, in my kind of dictionary, each entry is, in both effect and intention, a mini-essay. It is this, I think, which has really got under Jan Morris's skin. She dislikes, if the word is strong enough, what she imagines, I am sure wrongly, to be my attitude to life and she feels that one has a moral duty to accept the conventional definition of a dictionary. There were, after all, plenty of people who were anxious to tell James Joyce, in much

more violent terms than she has used about me, that *Ulysses* was not a novel. "What", Joyce felt entitled to reply, "is a novel?", and I likewise have no sense of guilt or shame in asking, "What is a dictionary? Is the dictionary made for man or man for the dictionary?"

If I were to be writing such a dictionary ten years from now, which God forbid, I am sure that the entries, but not the aim or the enthusiasm, would be very different. The old enemies of English lose their importance and new ones are always appearing on the battlefield. But two points occur to me. The first is that all arguments about language, especially other people's lan-

guage, tend to take on a certain witch-hunting quality and therefore to become exceedingly violent. I much regret this, but I think that, if such cannonades are to take place, ENCOUNTER, in view of its name, is as good and fruitful a place as any. And the second is that *The Dictionary of Diseased English* is shortly to be followed by *The Jargon of the Professions* and *The Language of Modern Politics*. I hope very much that Jan Morris will review them. A fine piece of polemic does nobody any harm, especially in these intellectually dreary days.

Kenneth Hudson

AUTHORS

Tom Paulin is a Lecturer in English at Nottingham University, and author of *Thomas Hardy: The Poetry of Perception* (Macmillan, 1976). His volume of poems, *A State of Justice* (Faber), was the Spring 1977 Choice of the Poetry Book Society.

George F. Kennan, formerly US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, is a Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. His numerous books include *Russia, the Atom, and the West* (1958) *From Prague After Munich* (1964) and, most recently *The Cloud of Danger* (New York: Little, Brown; London, Hutchinson).

D. J. Enright is a poet, literary critic, and novelist, and has held various Chairs of English Literature abroad. He was from 1970-72 co-editor of ENCOUNTER, and is now a director of Chatto & Windus, who published his collection of poems, *Sad Ires & Others*, in 1975, a novel for children, *The Joke Shop*, in 1976, and its sequel, *Wild Ghost Chase*, this spring. His poems in this issue are taken from *Paradise Illustrated* (the Poetry Book Society Choice for June), which Chatto & Windus bring out on June 22nd.

Lionel Abel is a Professor in the English Department of the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is a specialist in dramatic literature, and is the author of a number of plays which have been presented off Broadway. His books include *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (Hill & Wang).

Hilary Spurling is the author of *Ivy When Young: The Early Life of Ivy Compton-Burnett* (Gollancz, 1974) and *Handbook to Anthony Powell's Music of Time* (Heinemann, 1977).

David Lodge is Professor of Modern English Literature at the University of Birmingham. He is the author of five novels, including *Changing Places* (Secker & Warburg, 1975; Penguin, 1978). His most recent book of criticism is *The Modes of Modern Writing* (Edward Arnold and Cornell University Press, 1977).

Bernard Bergonzi is Professor of English at the University of Warwick. His latest book is *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (Macmillan, 1977).

Rosemary Jackson teaches in the School of English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia. She is working on a study of Gothic fiction and its influence on Dickens, and on a short book on fantasy.

Anthony Thwaite's most recent book of poems is *A Portion for Foxes* (Oxford University Press, 1977). Earlier this year Heinemann Educational published his *Twentieth Century English Poetry*.

Martin Esslin is Professor of Drama, Stanford University, and from 1963-77 was Head of Radio Drama at the BBC. He is the author, among other books, of *The Genius of the German Theatre* (1968), *The Peopled Wound: The Plays of Harold Pinter* (Methuen, 1970), *Artaud* (John Calder, 1976), and has edited *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of World Theatre* (Thames and Hudson, 1978).

Reiner Kunze's *The Wonderful Years* will be published by Sidgwick & Jackson this autumn, in a translation by Edwald Osers.

Philip Howard writes a regular column in *The Times* on the use and misuse of words, and is the author of *New Words for Old* (Hamish Hamilton, 1977).

Kenneth Hudson is a freelance author, lecturer and UNESCO consultant. His *Dictionary of Diseased English*, reviewed by Jan Morris in the April issue, was followed this spring by *The Jargon of the Professions* (both published by Macmillan Press).

Golo Mann, the distinguished German historian, is the author, among other books, of *A History of Germany Since 1789* (Chatto & Windus, 1968), and of *Wallenstein* (André Deutsch, 1976).

LETTERS

Freudian Confusion

IN HIS RECENT polemic against Freud [ENCOUNTER, January 1978], Professor H. J. Eysenck, describing me as a well-known apologist of Freudian theory, quotes me to the effect that I considered an experiment by Scodel confirmed Freudian theory.

Advisedly Eysenck failed to give the reference, *Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory*, P. Kline (Methuen, 1972), pp. 91-92, for had he so done, readers might have discovered that a conclusion was reached in this passage opposite to that claimed by Eysenck.

As is often the case, the gross inaccuracy was perpetrated by omissions of relevant material.

1. On page 91 I wrote "Finally two studies which produced results which confirmed Freudians would certainly regard as relevant to the aetiology of the oral and anal characters, deserve brief mention." Notice the phrase "confirmed Freudians." This is why I used the conditional tense in the sentence "the fact that small rather than large breasts were preferred *would have to be attributed* to reaction formation. . . ." (by confirmed Freudians) as is obvious from the opening of the paragraph. Similarly I concluded this paragraph "This, then, could be regarded as support for the Freudian aetiology of the oral character" (by confirmed Freudians) as is again obvious. The point was to show how confirmed Freudians could use this evidence.

2. On page 92 I concluded this discussion "Clearly these two findings could not support Freudian Psychosexual Theory." Thus the conclusion is the total opposite from that claimed by Eysenck. I do not prefer the Freudian theory, as he claims, in blithe disregard of evidence.

It seems to me monstrous that a scholar of Professor Eysenck's reputation, writing for a lay audience who are unlikely to know these references well, should be prepared to report work with such inaccuracy.

PAUL KLINE

Department of Psychology
University of Exeter

DR KLINE's letter poses a problem for me. He clearly must know what he intended to write, and I must accept that his intention was different from my interpretation. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to admit that I was in the wrong in coming to the conclusion I did. On page 92 of his book Dr Kline says, referring to the Scodel study: "We must admit that only psychoanalytic theory could have explained this observed relationship. This, then, could be regarded as support for the Freudian aetiology of the oral characters." I see no way in which this quotation could be attributed to the "confirmed Freudians" whom Kline makes responsible for the other remarks quoted. Note also his final remarks: "It must be admitted, even by the most convinced Eysenckian, that these results are highly interesting in the light of the theory."

Perhaps the truth is that Dr Kline was somewhat ambivalent in his evaluation, and did not express himself as clearly as might have been desirable. I apologise for any inadvertent misrepresentation of his views, but would echo his advice to readers to look at his own account; this would enable them to see to what extent my error was culpable.

H. J. EYSENCK

Institute of Psychiatry
Maudsley Hospital
London

Dame Margaret Cole on the Webbs

I WOULD BE very glad if you could spare some space for me to comment on Professor George Feaver's long article on the Webbs in the March ENCOUNTER. Before embarking on the general discussion, however, I should like to mention some inaccuracies which could have been avoided by a more careful reading of *Our Partnership*.

Our Partnership was edited by Mrs Barbara Drake and myself and published in 1948; but as the preface clearly states, this was done at the request of Sidney Webb, Lord Passfield. Lord Passfield did not live to see it in print, as he died in October 1947. But by then the material was almost all in type, and it would not have been practicable to search Beatrice Webb's *Diaries*—much less the mass of the Webb correspondence—to do the kind of checking-up which Professor Feaver suggests. We were well aware that Mrs Webb had planned other volumes (and the preface says as much); but she had not completed them, and *Our Partnership* was the only complete book available. The only change we made was due to the excessive length of the book, which the publisher said we must reduce; and it seemed better to omit the solid chunk of the foreign tour (which in any case was partly written by Sidney) than to cut small pieces out of Beatrice's own text.

As regards the omission of the foreign tours generally, I am quite unrepentant, notwithstanding the favourable reception of the New Zealand one. The Webbs were more sympathetic to New Zealand than they were to either Australia or the United States; and their impressions in both the latter cases were superficial, and were strongly criticised in the introduction to both tours when they were finally published. They had not in either case taken the trouble to read up anything about the countries before they went there—as they did in the case of the USSR; and their impressions were therefore only "tourist impressions" of what they chose to look at. Sidney Webb actually said, in a passage quoted in the *Diary*, that they did not know enough about the United States to give a real report on it; and as to Asia, Beatrice herself wrote that she disliked the Chinese too much to provide a really impartial statement about them.

AS TO WHAT THEY DID choose to see, they were—naturally—much interested in the details of government, in the practice of the American House of Representatives, for example, rather than in either history or personalities. They did notice corruption—as, indeed, they could hardly have failed to do; and

they thought both Chicago and Pittsburgh nasty messy cities. They were happier when they had gone further west, to the Mormon Salt Lake City which Beatrice had visited in her girlhood; and they were really pleased when they reached Honolulu on their way home. On personalities, the views they expressed were of little value: as Robert Ensor pointed out, in the chapter on "Permeation" which he contributed to the volume of essays on *The Webbs and Their Work* (published after they were both dead), they were always bad judges of political personalities, preferring to work with people like the spineless Rosebery or intellectuals like Haldane and Arthur Balfour, rather than with those who had real influence such as Lloyd George. They formed very variant opinions about William Jennings Bryan—and later said George Lansbury was very like him!; they thought very poorly of Altgeld of Chicago; and Beatrice even reserved her highest commendation, both in America and India, for persons who reminded her of Gerald and Arthur Balfour. In the Far East, their admiration of the tidy-minded and well-disciplined Japanese was altogether excessive; and I well remember listening to a dispute between Beatrice and Bertrand Russell in which Russell accused her of turning down the Chinese completely because they *smelt*.

By contrast, after the ignominious showing of the second Labour government had convinced them that "gradualism", in the 20th century, had come to mean "stagnation" or perhaps retrogression, they had done a good deal of study of the USSR before they visited it; and Professor Feaver might surely recollect that in the early inter-War period a good many radicals (including his own country's ambassador) were anxious to believe that the Russian Communists were working in the right direction, even if they made

serious mistakes on the way. I would add that the convictions of the leading Russian Communists—including the limitations on their personal incomes then in force—chimed in with the search for a faith to live by which had exercised Beatrice's mind ever since her youth; and that the precedent she thought of for those leaders was *not* the Samurai of H. G. Wells, but the members of the Society of Jesus. Of course they had something of the outlook of responsible empire-administrators of the ruling class—who would have expected otherwise? But in their own country this was checked by practical experience of the results—whereas outside they had no experience to guide them. For all these reasons, I and others have not found that the Webbs' account of their tours contained anything of much value to English readers: nor, I may say, did those who wrote introductions to the Australian and American records when they were at last published.

Perhaps you will permit me to add a final brief protest against Professor Feaver's hasty acceptance of an accusation made by that teller of tall stories, Harold J. Laski, in a private letter, that I made much personal profit out of the Webbs. I did not. I received a modest editorial fee for what I did in the way of editing—as no doubt Professor Feaver will out of a reprint just announced, to which he has contributed an introduction—but the only personal profit I made (which was not a great deal) was from the memoir of Beatrice which I wrote just after her death. The Fabian Biographical Tract on the Webbs, and some other lectures and articles, I did free of charge.

MARGARET COLE

London

Haltwhistle Remembered

A Last, Nostalgic Exchange

IN ONE WAY, Professor John Weightman's memories of Haltwhistle [ENCOUNTER, May] confirm my own sense of things so well that it isn't possible to read them without the gratitude that comes from a sense of real meeting. But what a queer exchange takes place between us, all the same. We come from different worlds—he from Haltwhistle, I from *doonby*: and as he comes *from*, I feel as though I pass him going *to*. He comes to education, social mobility, linguistic science, *intra-* and *extra-texte*, and France, and Bloy and Claudel: and I find more and more that to go on in that direction will leave you in the intellectual common-market, which is nowhere. He looks to the standard—I look for a language.

It was strange to me, at first, when Professor Weightman spoke of his *instinct*—until it dawned on me that it is an instinct for the present, its standards; the Standard English whose real measure is the only standard we have left—science. I won't say that my instinct is for the past, since the present won't last forever. But it is the past that sets my own hopes for the

future and, for the present, *la science ne possède aucune valeur ordonnatrice*, as Malraux said. It seems so odd to me to have an instinct for the superiority of our standard because it is no longer a literary standard—where is one to be found and not find something immeasurably superior in the past? An instinct for literature, poetry, places, people—who are like poems to me, good ones and bad ones—for cultures, styles, the personality of Haltwhistle and how it hangs together, for the standard when it is Lawrence's or Johnson's and not newspaper, or BBC RP—for all of this I can have an instinct. But for a standard that possesses only negative qualities (it's not like anything that comes from anywhere, and isn't literary, i.e. it doesn't belong to anyone): I don't know how to have an instinct for *that*.

So Professor Weightman, though older than me and from Haltwhistle, seems less to me of his past and of the place than I—though not in a factual sense. We are like one another turned inside-out, in what we make of our experience, but meet when we talk

of the place we both know. John Weightman uses the word "nostalgia" of me twice—and I must let most of the imputation pass—and feels better for feeling none, which is fair enough, if nostalgia is sentimental. But even so, is it possible to say, even now, in English, that he doesn't "share my nostalgia for such archaic societies" (I think he might have denied himself the easy word *archaic*, but let it pass too) *because* "they are doomed . . . by education and social mobility"? Of course, he means to intimate his own realism. But still, knowledge of doom wouldn't be a prophylactic to most. And what does he feel then? Does his sense of doom prevent *regret* for the "close, warm, human relationships" which will be surpassed by "social mobility"? "I feel no nostalgia/regret for something in my own past because it is doomed." It may be standard, but it would make the world strange to me.

IT IS A SIGN of my own inside-outness that I had to have the real meaning ("semantic deep structure"?) of this pointed out to me: *that which is doomed can't be any good*. That's what is at the bottom of it, right at the bottom, deep down, beyond words that anyone could point to as of the scientific "register." The logic contains a wordless analogy (progress : material)—coming out of the unspoken Given of the times. John Weightman's instinct comes from within. I am outside—and it is strange to me, and a bit unnerving, if it and I are doomed.

Still, one must dree one's weird, and something in me pricks up an ear, when I see the unspoken begin to come, like form from the void. There's nothing wrong with the words *understanding* or *barrier*—but here, I see a shape:

"Anyone deeply attached to a local form of speech knows that it only works within its limited area . . . like all particular languages it can be a barrier to wider understanding."

I hear the toneless collocations of "communication barrier" and "international understanding" leading, we hope, to tolerance and goodwill. How can you be deeply attached in such language? Isn't it the antithesis of attachment—an outcome, automatic and inevitable, of *detachment*—"objectivity"? And isn't it true of *any* language; dialects, the diction of individuals, specialist "registers"? What is different takes understanding. If everything was equally understandable you would have one basic or scientific English, and everything would be the same—everyone would be the same, if everyone spoke it. There would be no languages, and no real language at all, nothing to say, no difference or distinction, nothing to help a person be a real person. This would all be so obvious to us if we weren't already unconsciously driving our vehicles of communication down the wide flat straight motorways of habitual thought with the windows all wound up to make ourselves deaf. It is what education and social mobility do for us all.

In that case, I shall go to my doom rejoicing. Mr Weightman's "superior" standard—what is it superior *for*?—isn't to me the instrument of freedom that it was, but growing more of a prison, nowadays. The word literacy is no longer cognate with literature; the Bullock Report on Literacy is illiterate. The genuinely personal standard which fades in Professor Weight-

man when he wants to be scientific about his own experience is where I meet him, before we part. Our standard is infested with it—the science habit. And as Simone Weil says, there's more than one science. So here, the unspoken takes substance, and comes to dry land, from moving on the waters:

"The speech forms must have fluctuated incessantly, each individual grasping what he or she could of them, but of necessity being unable to carve out a coherent system from a mass that was uncertain . . . there must have been any number of *paroles*, while *la langue* was: a shifting, ultimately indefinable entity, i.e. not really an entity at all."

It is automatic, nowadays, that anything that can't be *defined*, or *systematised*, (definition, classification, analysis—our basic thought-slag) doesn't properly exist. It's like saying that the universe isn't an entity (and a language, like a poem, is a universe) because no one knows, even yet, where—or whether—it begins or ends. We *must* have our systems, because we think, like John Weightman, that chaos is next, and are a bit afraid. And his "of necessities" and "musts" are dogma—he *can't possibly know*.

SO WHEN I COME to his wish to exclaim in Haltwhistle: "Long live all attempts to establish an arbitrary human order in the face of the contingent!", I wonder why he wants to, at all. Why not say something different, like "God Save the Queen!" or "lang may ye'r lum reek"? To me it merely looks like a use for *arbitrary*

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JOHN
MURRAY

and *contingent*. That's the sort of thing those words allow you to say, but you can't exclaim in it, that's obvious. (Incidentally, I've never clearly understood whether the contingent is arbitrary or not, or if the arbitrary isn't contingent.) There'll be something similar, and better, in the Bible, or Shakespeare, or Burns. I try to speak with them. As for *our* standard, I feel like Hugh McDiamid: "the beaten track was always beaten."

BRIAN LEE

*Jesmond
Newcastle on Tyne*

MR LEE makes some telling points against me, but I see, from the way in which he has interpreted some of my remarks, that I did not express myself clearly enough. If he has understood me to be in favour of science as a form of moral truth, or of technological advance as inevitably representing progress, or of the standard language as being definite, finite and therefore good, or of "common-market culture", we are talking at cross purposes. Coming from a very limited setting, I appreciate its particularity, but I also see its disadvantages from the inside, whereas Mr Lee can view its exotic quality, as a stranger, from the outside. Lévi-Strauss waxes lyrical about the Nambikwara, but would he have opted to be one, had the choice been possible?

I admit that I have always had what I take to be a natural human itch for intellectual universalism; I recognise such universalism to be an impossible ideal, especially for me, but I have not found a better. And, by universalism, I do not mean insipid generality, but acute understanding of details in relation to principles.

I am not nostalgic about the Haltwhistle of fifty years ago because, in spite of the human warmth and the genuineness of the rural background, it was a partly maimed society, not healthily poor and simple (like, say, the community in Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise*, whether that be fact or fiction), but poverty-stricken, half-peasant, half-industrialised, "neether nowt nor summat", with a dead religion and a limited dialect. The changes that have occurred have not been all to the good, but they have lifted a pall of unnecessary suffering and ventilated the place morally to some extent. On the debit side, in Haltwhistle as elsewhere, are the evils of "development" and the pap of pop culture. I am all for denouncing them, but I cannot see how one can turn the clock back. One

can only try again, in the present, to grope towards a satisfactory balance between the particular and the universal.

JOHN WEIGHTMAN

London

"... than me"

GWYNN NETTLER (ENCOUNTER, April) is behind the times in objecting to "No one is better than me." What would he have? "... than I am" is grammatically correct but rather formal. "... than I", however correct, is intolerable. "... than me" is now accepted idiom and in English idiom often triumphs over grammar. Alternatively "than" can be regarded in this phrase as a preposition and therefore is followed by an accusative. If Nettler had studied Fowler-Gower he would not have wasted my time or your space.

A. J. P. TAYLOR

London

Flew's Left & Right

PROFESSOR ANTONY FLEW's suggestion (ENCOUNTER, October) that we construe the expressions Right-wing and Left-wing "as having connotations appropriate to" their denotations, which we cannot change, is appealing but unfair to the facts. If it were the case (as he believes) that only those concerned with individual choice were called Right-wing, and only those concerned to impose forced monopoly and equalisation Left-wing, then the two groups might, as he proposes, agree to let the labels name those qualities. But the facts of usage are more complex. "Right-wing" is also applied to many groups much exercised about the racial composition of Britain, but very little about liberty and choice; while "Left-wing" is applied to, and accepted by, syndicalist elements in the labour movement, that also claim to be very concerned about the centralisation of power in this country.

Since, therefore, the denotations of both "Right-wing" and "Left-wing" are what they are, there is no single connotation to fit either of them. Perhaps we need a second political dimension, so that groups can be assigned a position on some square of oppositions?

YORICK WILKS

*Department of Language & Linguistics
University of Essex*

YES, CERTAINLY. We do need to recognise at least one more dimension, since attitudes to race do not correlate with positions on the state-collectivist Left to pluralist-libertarian Right spectrum. But where today are those supposedly significant elements in the British Left who actively oppose the extension of state monopoly at home and the advance of Soviet power abroad?

ANTONY FLEW

*Department of Philosophy
University of Reading*

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Life & Letters Today

Northampton

PERFECT: *A College computer, programmed to write sonnets, can now produce millions of original works, it was claimed yesterday.*

Mr John Neville, 45, a lecturer at Nene College of Further Education, Northampton, worked with Mr Graham Saddington, the college computer manager, for 18 months to prepare the sonnets programme.

It involves a vast data bank of words, phrases and half lines from which the computer makes a random selection to create its finished sonnet. The last five lines of one sonnet are:

And so it is in my depth concealed,
This store keeps yet the greatest truth of all
And to men shall it never be revealed.
So consider, take heed of what I say
This day you rule, tomorrow I hold sway,

Mr Neville said last night: "I have always been fascinated about the possibility of computers and the result of our work raises the question of just how far any artist can claim to be capable of truly original work."

The computer, he said: "achieved perfect working conditions for itself."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Tokyo

GOTHIC TYPE: China has stopped special treatment of quotations of the late Chairman Mao Tse-tung in official newspapers. The People's Daily and other official Chinese publications have ceased printing Mao's quotations in Gothic type.

Some observers in Peking view the new trend as an indication of a rapid move toward modernization and also a symbol of quiet progress in China's departure from Mao's thought.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

SINGULARITY: It is sad that Mr Ronald Butt in defending the Royal Family should so assail the Queen's English as to write "The media has to make up its mind."

THE TIMES

Johannesburg

WHAT'S IN A WORD: *The word "nationality" is to be substituted for "race" on application forms for Barclay cards in South Africa after complaints of discrimination by non-white businessmen.*

Mr Esmay Potgieter, National Manager for Barclaycard in South Africa, said "It is good common sense for an organisation such as ours to know the race of a person", adding "that there was no good reason why the word race should not be changed to nationality which is perhaps a far better word."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

JERRY: A minuscule contribution to scholarship (just published) is a vest-pocket "Dictionary of Eponymists" (characters whose names have become part of the language). The dictionary announces that

"the Jerry Brothers headed an early 19th-century Liverpool building firm which, using shoddy materials, put up showy, jerry-built houses."

However, eager to know more, [we] learned from a helpful Liverpool Record Office that the two Jerries are probably mythological figures.

It is true that the phrase "jerry-built" originated in Liverpool around 1830. It is also true that a reader's letter to a newspaper 54 years later reported that the words commemorated the name of a building firm on the Mersey. But the scholars who compiled the Oxford English Dictionary could find no supporting evidence for this.

One alternative theory is that the phrase may be connected with the crumbly walls of Jericho.

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

London

BOOK STARVED: *Many children are starved of books, according to an article in the educational journal Teachers' World, by Mr P. W. R. Foot. He accuses some teachers and librarians of being "more concerned about losing a few books than about the school library being in continuous use."*

"We do not provide nearly enough material for youngsters in their early years. Books ought to abound everywhere; shelves full of good reading in every classroom. But it's not so."

Mr Foot, a teacher, is not disturbed by the fact that many girls spend their spare time reading weekly papers emphasising pop-stars, romance, horoscopes, beauty treatments and fashion. "But better this kind of reading than none at all", he says.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

TRANSLATESE: Except for one ungrammatical line—"Why don't I love the cherry orchard like I used to?"—Michael Frayn's new translation [of "The Cherry Orchard"] is excellent. In sum: I liked the play as I used to, and do, and always will.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

New York City

PHRASEOLOGY: Fashionable phrases appear and submerge with startling rapidity in trendy US society. The latest cool expression for "I understand" beats most. It is "I know where you're coming from." But I like the answer a Los Angeles lady barman gave recently when asked how old she was. "Over 39 and holding on," she said.

DAILY MAIL

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